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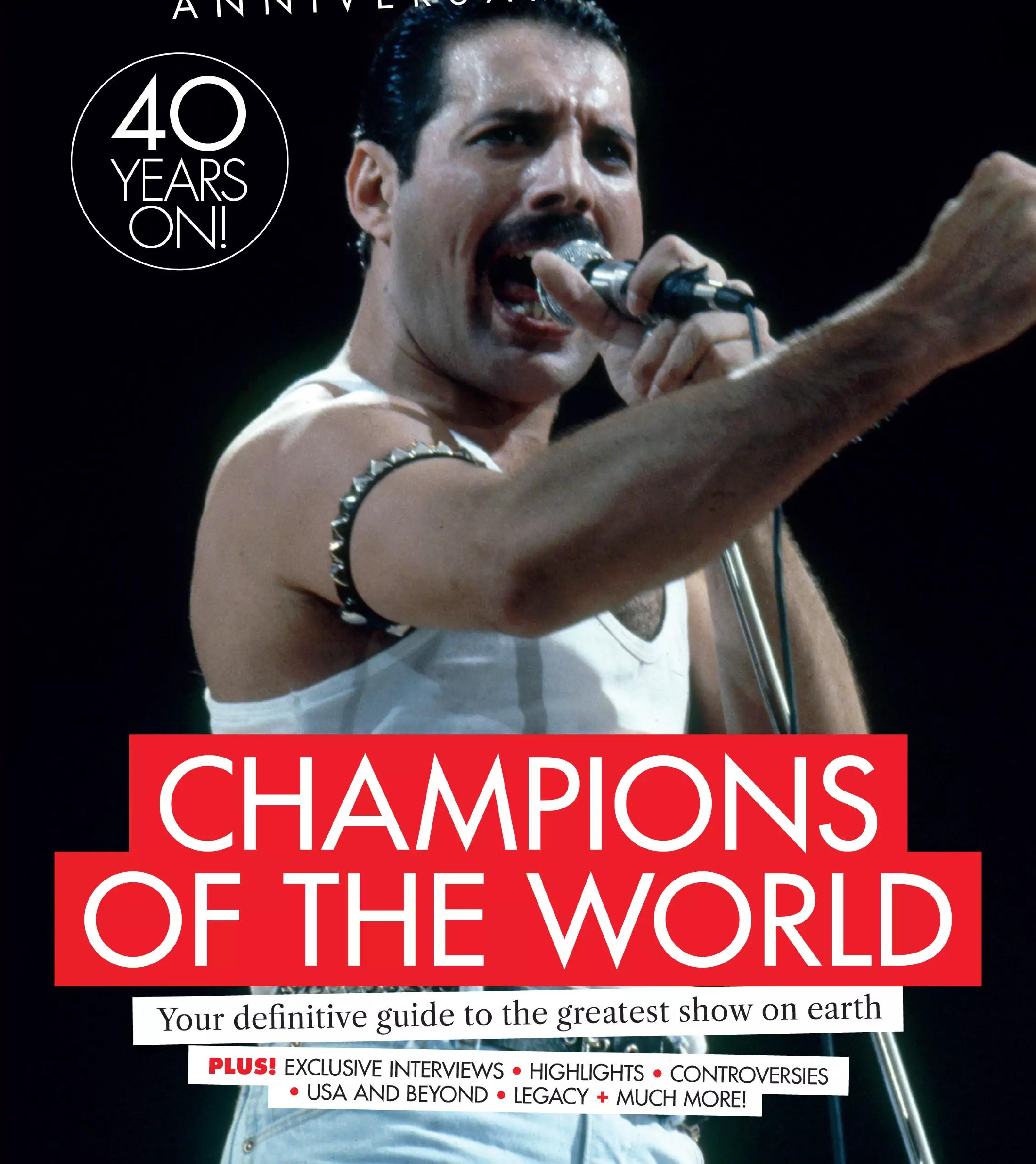

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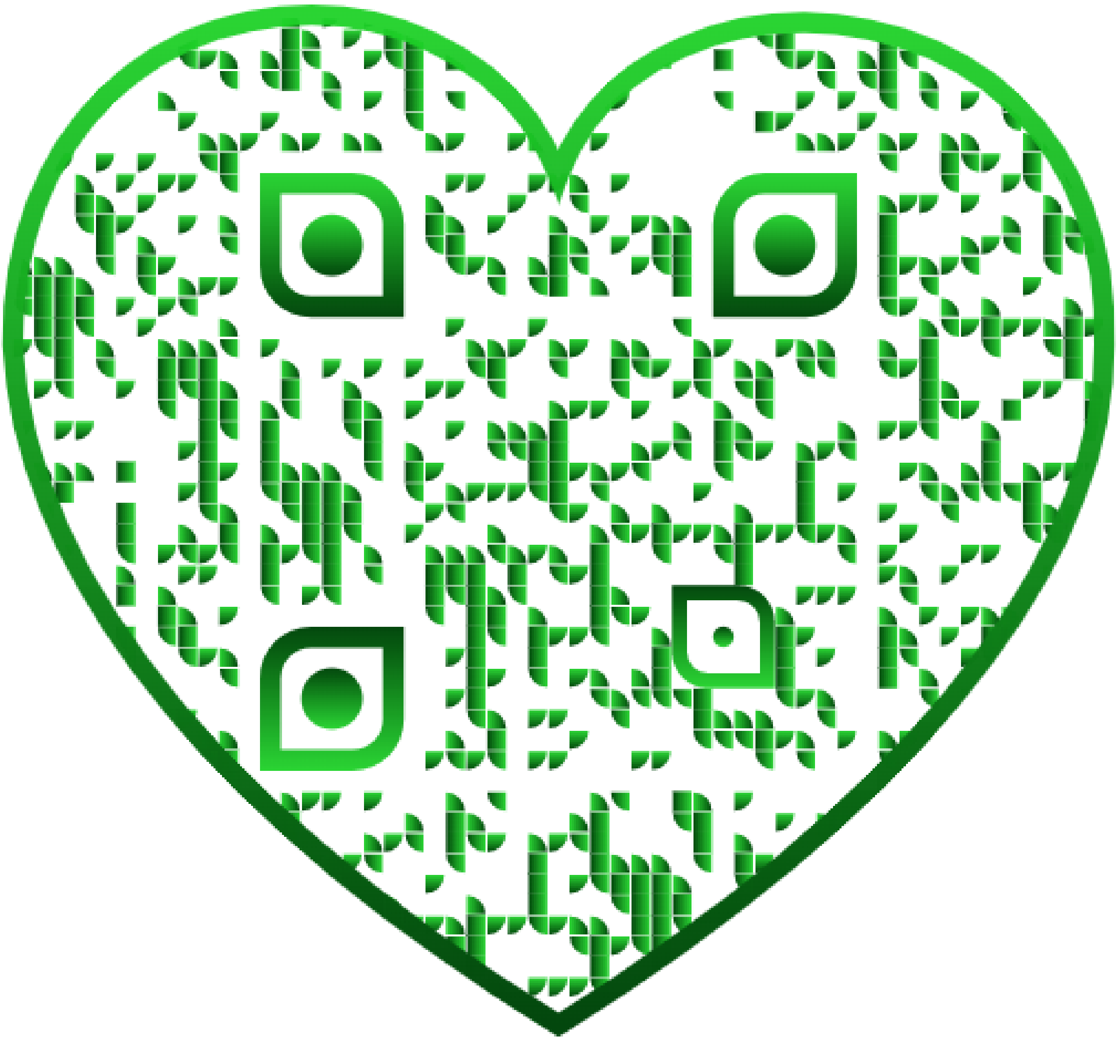

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CLASSIC POP

WELCOME

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JULY 13th 1985 at WEMBLEY STADIUM
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How on Earth it happened at all is a genuine miracle. Yet, by the time Queen took to the stage for their momentous 20-minute set, Live Aid's status as the greatest musical event of all time was set in stone.

Freddie Mercury, punching the air in iconic white vest and jeans, had Wembley's 72,000-strong crowd eating out of his hand – a musical moon landing if you will. This, we all sensed at the time, was a truly once-in-a-lifetime moment.

I was barely in double figures when Live Aid hit our TV screens, yet it's burned in my memory. I was "ay-oh-ing" along with Freddie from my living room carpet, just as the estimated 1.9 billion watching across 150 different nations were too. That's around 40% of the world's population, by the way.

I was wide-eyed as the world's superstars convened and sparred for attention: personal high points included Bowie's epic production of *Heroes*, George's coming-of-age duet with Elton on *Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me*, Mick and Tina's sizzling chemistry and Madonna's sparkling set at JFK Stadium in Philadelphia – and, as with most of us, Queen owning the whole event.

It may have been hastily put together, but that just added to the thrill. But, of course, it wasn't about the A-list line-up. As Bob Geldof made clear as day – and with the help of some typically fruity language – it was all about Africa. I clearly remember the now-infamous Michael Buerk *BBC News* feature on famine in Ethiopia that had first inspired Bob to take action. It was one of my first realisations of how lucky I really was. And, while there's since been valuable debate around the validity of such an event – and its lack of Black and female performers – at the time, it was a revelatory moment for the world, a jaw-dropping spectacular that earned millions for famine relief.

A genuine miracle, then, in more ways than one.

Rik

Rik Flynn, Editor

David Bowie famously gave up a song slot to screen a CBC video on the Ethiopian famine

© Getty

JUST FOR ONE DAY

DESPITE SCORING ONE OF THE BIGGEST-SELLING SINGLES IN UK HISTORY WITH BAND AID, THE MILLIONS RAISED WEREN'T ENOUGH. FEELING THE RESPONSIBILITY TO CONTINUE FUNDRAISING, BOB GELDOF SET ABOUT ASSEMBLING AN EVENT THAT PROVED CHARITY WASN'T JUST FOR CHRISTMAS.

MARK LINDORES

Shortly after 7:30pm at Live Aid, the crowd still reeling from Queen's iconic set, David Bowie brought pop's biggest party to a crushing halt with a stark reminder of the purpose of the event. Having cut short his own set to allow time for a screening of a harrowing video of the horrors of the famine in Ethiopia, he exited the stage with an appeal to the world. "Lest we forget why we're here. I'd like to introduce a video made by CBC Television. The subject speaks for itself. Please send your money in," he said.

As an eerie hush descended upon the 72,000 fans packed into a baking hot Wembley Stadium, a video recalling the devastating images of the starving children that had ignited the entire Band Aid movement nine months earlier in Michael Buerk's report was relayed on the big screens that

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OPPOSITE: David Bowie, George Michael and more onstage at the Wembley finale

flanked the stage. Set to the haunting melody of The Cars' *Drive*, the footage stunned the crowd into silence while others sobbed at the shocking scenes.

The moving film triggered a similarly emotive response from the estimated 1.9 billion people watching at home as it prompted the biggest surge in donations throughout the entire event, justifying Bowie's decision to drop a song from his own set to allow time for the screening. "I thought it was a very important piece of footage," Bowie later explained to Radio 1. "The point wasn't to promote singles; the point was to bring awareness to the situation."

Although charity concerts weren't an entirely new concept at the time, they were still very rare, with George Harrison's 1971 Concert For Bangladesh the most high-profile event of its kind to date. Although a live event of some kind was mooted during the recording of Band Aid's *Do They Know It's Christmas?* in November 1984, it was at a Culture Club concert a month later when the idea sparked into a reality. The song's dominance of the charts and record-breaking sales had made it a certainty for the coveted Christmas No.1 slot and an early celebration came on the final night of the group's UK tour on 22 December, when they were joined on-stage at Wembley Arena by an all-star line-up including George Michael, Paul Young, Elton John, Tony Hadley and Marilyn for an encore of *Do They Know It's Christmas?* Suddenly, the prospect of a live gathering of pop's biggest names didn't seem so out of reach.

Though Bob Geldof had fully expected the single to be a one-off endeavour and his role in the cause to be over, back in his day job as Boomtown Rats frontman once the new year dawned, the behemoth that was Band Aid continued to be all-encompassing. He became a reluctant spokesman for the cause, meeting with politicians and world leaders to discuss the best solutions to Africa's devastating hunger. In January 1985 he was invited to oversee the recording of USA For Africa's *We Are The World* as well as travelling to Africa on a publicity tour to witness firsthand where the funds raised had gone.

"THE SHOW WOULD HAVE TO BE AS BIG AS IS HUMANLY POSSIBLE…"

BOB GELDOF

In what turned out to be an eye-opening experience, Geldof was dismayed by how small an impact the millions already raised would make in alleviating the gargantuan problem. Faced with political corruption and cartels in Africa, he was frustrated and powerless that he was unable to keep his promise that every penny raised would go directly to feeding the starving. A live event was a natural next step to further the cause, though Geldof was adamant that it had to be the biggest event the world had ever seen.

"The show would have to be as big as is humanly possible," he told *Melody Maker* in January 1985. "There's no point [in] just 5,000 fans turning up at Wembley [Arena]. We needto have Wembley [Stadium] linked with Madison Square Garden and the whole show to be televised worldwide. It would be great for Duran to play three or four numbers at Wembley and then flick to Madison Square, where Springsteen would be playing. While he's on, the Wembley stage could be made ready for the next British act like the Thompsons or whoever. In that way, lots of acts could be featured, and the television rights, tickets, and so on could raise a phenomenal amount of money."

There was only one person that could pull off an event of that magnitude – enter Harvey Goldsmith, the biggest tour promoter in the world. Goldsmith had music's biggest acts on his roster

OPPOSITE: Tina Turner duetting with Mick Jagger at the US Live Aid

and had just orchestrated Wham's historic tour of China, so was no stranger to creating landmark events. From its inception, Live Aid was envisioned as a multi-site endeavour with London and New York the two main locations and smaller events planned for Russia, Japan, Austria, Yugoslavia, West Germany and Australia (due to the time difference, Sydney's Oz For Africa concert was the first to kick off). With New York's largest venues fully booked, operations were moved to Philadelphia's John F. Kennedy Stadium to host the US leg of Live Aid. The concerts would be televised live around the world with the aid of 13 military satellites.

As unbelievable as it sounds in hindsight due to the historic nature of the occasion, securing big names to perform at the event did not come easy – even with someone as well connected as Goldsmith on board. Whether it was stars burnt out from mammoth tours of their own, working on their own projects or paranoid perfectionists worried the logistics would prevent them being seen at their best, many artists declined the offer and many who did end up on the bill had to be convinced. In some cases, Geldof announced artists before they'd agreed and when they complained he refused to clarify publicly, daring them to renounce their involvement.

"People now say, how could an artist refuse to be on a show like that? But my memory prior to the event was how Bob and Harvey Goldsmith struggled to get the artists," production manager Andy Zweck later told *The Guardian*. "Bob had to play some tricks to get artists involved. He had to call Elton and say Queen are in and Bowie's in, and of course they weren't. Then he'd call Bowie and say Elton and Queen are in. It was a game of bluff."

> "BOB HAD TO PLAY TRICKS TO GET ARTISTS INVOLVED… IT WAS A GAME OF BLUFF"
>
> **ANDY ZWECK**

The line-up for the Philadelphia show in particular struggled and is perhaps more notable for who didn't perform, with Michael Jackson, Bruce Springsteen and Prince among the notable absentees. It was later rumoured that the lack of Black artists invited to perform had been a major issue and the reason so many didn't appear (Stevie Wonder is said to have turned it down as he didn't want to be "the token Black artist" on the bill. Even Lionel Richie, co-writer of *We Are The World*, only appeared as part of the ensemble in the finale.

Looking back at the predominantly white male line-up, the lack of female artists across the two stages is also staggering, with only Madonna and Sade representing the enormous wealth of female talent ruling the charts at the time. The absence of Annie Lennox, Kate Bush, Bananarama and Cyndi Lauper is bewildering, with Tina Turner and Alison Moyet relegated to duet partners for Mick Jagger and Paul Young respectively despite having hugely successful albums at the time.

What Live Aid lacked in diversity, it inevitably made up for in spectacle and ambition. Whether it was career-defining performances (Queen, U2), ambitious stunts (Phil Collins flying by Concorde to perform at both events) or boosting an artist's profile (the following month saw Madonna hold the No.1 and No.2 positions in the UK simultaneously with *Into The Groove* and *Holiday*, following their outings at Live Aid), the concert achieved what it had set out to do. As well as being the biggest event of its kind, it set a benchmark for how impactful live music could be in raising money and awareness for worthy causes. Live Aid itself went on to raise over $140 million, but its true legacy is the billions raised for countless charities since that glorious summer day in 1985. ■

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George Michael, Bono, Paul McCartney and Freddie Mercury hold the stage for the finale

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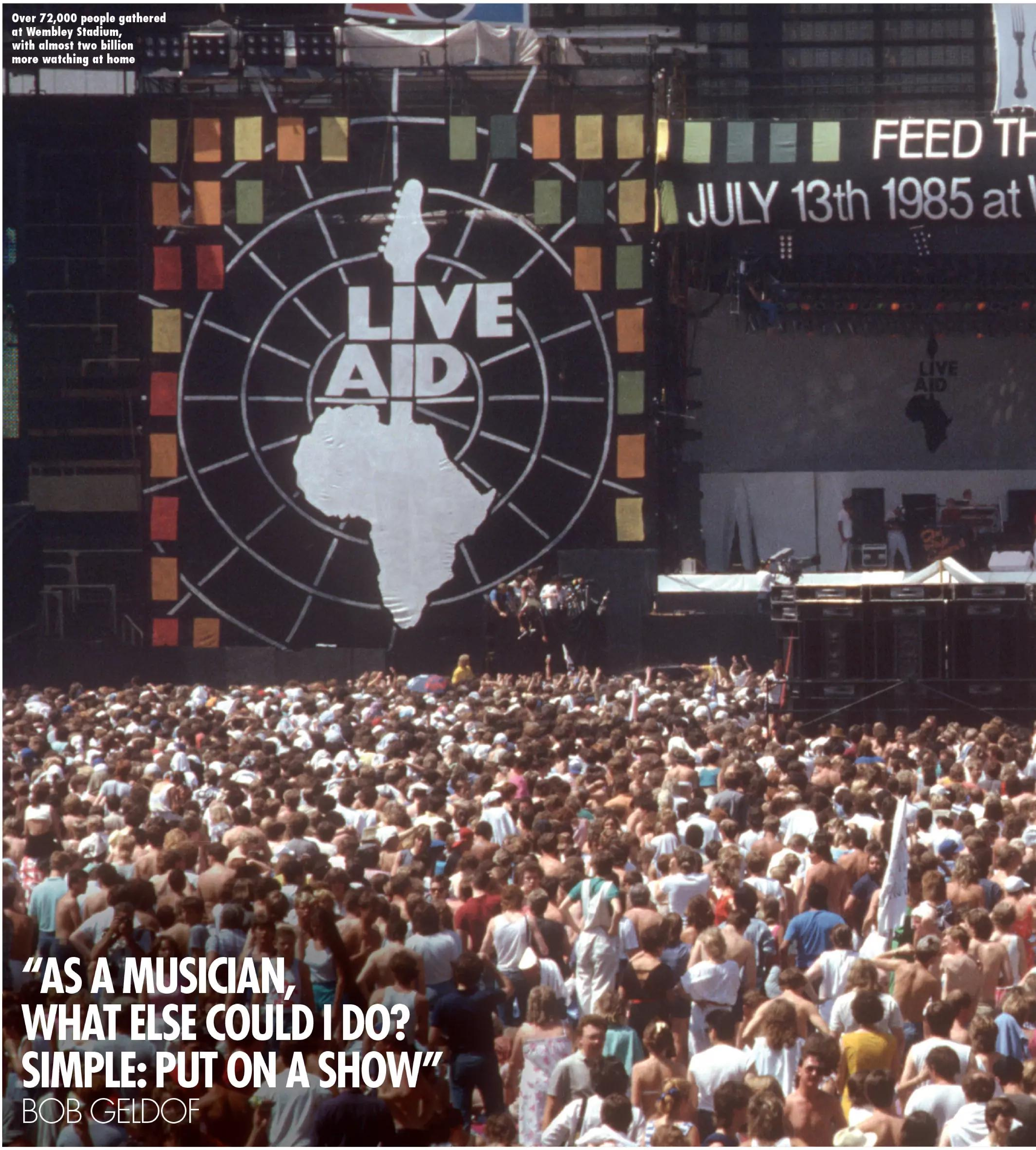
“ONCE WE HAD QUEEN, DAVID BOWIE AND MICK JAGGER, WE KNEW WE HAD A SHOW”

AFTER BAND AID, POP COULD NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN. HOWEVER, AS ITS KEY PLAYERS EXPLAIN IN THIS ARCHIVE INTERVIEW, IT WAS ONLY BLUFF, BLUSTER AND BOB THAT COULD POSSIBLY HAVE MADE LIVE AID HAPPEN…

JOHN EARLS

In the aftermath of Band Aid, Bob Geldof became revered by the public and distant from music. He thought the impact of *Do They Know It’s Christmas?* would be over by the New Year of 1985, when The Boomtown Rats were going on tour. But instead, Geldof became the public face of charity and the man believed to have the answers for famine relief. He speaks to *CP* just after a magazine shoot at a photo studio in South London, so he’s got his silver stage jacket on. Wearing the jacket makes him feel like a rock star, says Geldof, and he certainly speaks with the stage presence of a true showman.

The musicians we spoke to for this feature are united in one belief: if Bob Geldof asked you to play Live Aid, you played. He’s far from a bully, but his certainty gives nobody any other options. Yet even Geldof had been spooked by the enormity of Band Aid. “The impact of it scared me,” he says.



Over 72,000 people gathered at Wembley Stadium, with almost two billion more watching at home

“AS A MUSICIAN, WHAT ELSE COULD I DO? SIMPLE: PUT ON A SHOW”
BOB GELDOF

“I didn’t know what I should do. In my head, I’d thought I could go straight back from Band Aid to being a musician. I was a born salesman – I sold tunes the way my dad sold towels – but suddenly I couldn’t sell The Boomtown Rats. I couldn’t go on *Wogan* and be asked about Africa and say ‘Well, Terry, it’s amazing, and incidentally the Rats are touring, here’s a song we’re playing.’ I’d carried the band on my crusade and we were f***ed.”

Going to Ethiopia had only made Geldof more aware that the charity was, no pun intended, only a sticking plaster for the scale of famine in Africa. “Band Aid worked,” emphasises Geldof. “But there was so much more to do. I’d said to myself I’d do what I could if Band Aid worked, so it would have been irresponsible not to take that to its logical conclusion. As a musician, what else could I do? Simple: put on a show.”

Enter Harvey Goldsmith. The promoter for Queen, Madonna, Pink Floyd and Elton John, he was perfectly suited to ensure Geldof’s wild plans could happen. Goldsmith has a forbidding reputation but, while he

HE WORLD
WEMBLEY STADIUM
LIVE AID
LIVE AID

© Getty

talks down the phone from his office in a stern tone, he's got a ready wit and plainly loves the "berserk" side of music. "Bob came to see me, telling me we needed to put on a big charity concert," he recalls. "I was about to head off with Wham! to China, so I was a bit preoccupied. I just said, 'Can we talk about this when I get back?' Bob being Bob, he barged in to see me the day after I got back." Goldsmith agreed to help but, having settled on 13 July as a date, they had just 10 weeks to put it together.

"Announcing names was a total bluff," admits Geldof. "We did a press conference and announced a list of names. I was guilt-tripping them. If they didn't want to do it, I'd make them say they wouldn't help, not me."

One such name was Queen. "Their manager phoned up from New Zealand, yelling 'We don't know anything about this!'" says Goldsmith. "I told him 'Bob wants you to play.' It was crazy, really. They agreed."

Midge Ure, Band Aid's producer and co-writer, remembers Geldof exerting extra pressure.

"Bob bumped into Freddie in a Japanese restaurant," he smiles. "When Bob insisted Queen were playing, Freddie told him 'Don't be silly, darling.' To which Bob replied: 'No, you're doing it or I'll jump up and down on you.'" Queen signed.

As for Ure, the Ultravox singer was supposed to be recording his debut solo album but, like his Band Aid partner, his day-job went on hold. "We lacked skill in aid work," he explains. "We didn't know whether to prioritise food, medication or trucking. The tipping point came when we learned there was a cartel that controlled aid trucks. Bob was outraged, saying we had to break the cartel. That was expensive, and it sparked Live Aid. But I had very little to do with organising the concerts – I was happy to leave it to the specialists like Harvey while trying to oversee the day-to-day charity side."

Despite the success of Band Aid and the idea of playing Wembley Stadium, Geldof and Goldsmith initially struggled to get musicians on board. "Charity concerts like this had very rarely happened," Goldsmith points out. "Managers were phoning me going 'How will it actually work?'"

As Spandau Ballet bassist Martin Kemp puts it: "Before Live Aid, festivals were owned by heavy metal bands. Pop acts just didn't do them. It was hard for the industry to get its head round the idea of a big outdoor concert which had bands from *Top Of The Pops* playing."

Dire Straits were one of the first big names to agree, despite Live Aid falling during their 13-night residency at Wembley Arena next to the stadium. "Bob was most insistent," deadpans bassist John Illsley. "He kept phoning, saying 'If you guys do it, there's more chance I'll get others.' So we agreed to play in the afternoon, although that made for a tricky situation to get our gear back and forth from Wembley Arena."

The Wembley Stadium show has long been praised for its mix of new popsters and veterans, but Goldsmith admits that was largely accidental. "In truth, we put on who we could get," he says. "We didn't have time to look at the sophistication of the mix. Once we had Queen, David Bowie and Mick Jagger, we knew we had a show."

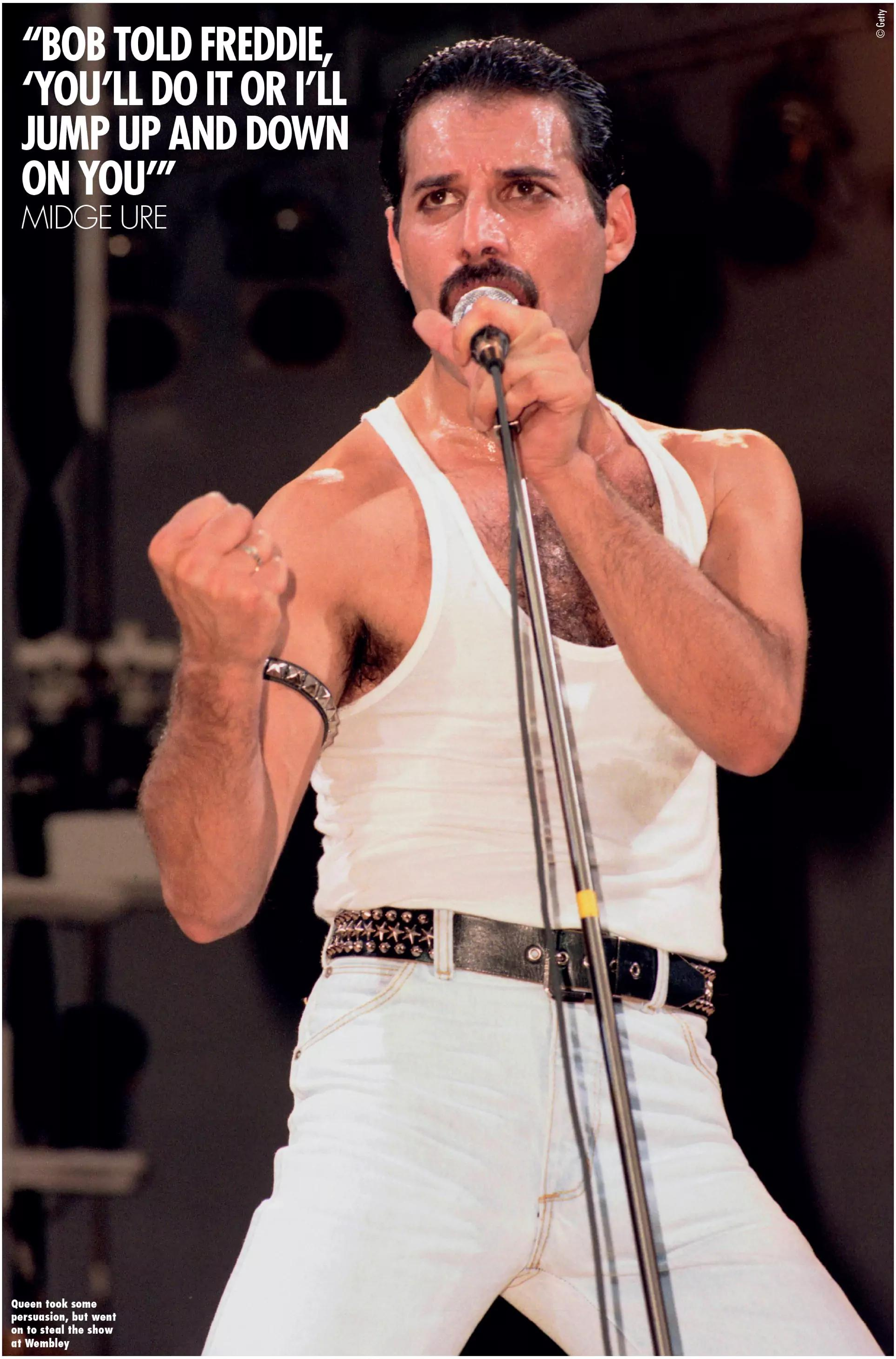
At which point, Geldof had another idea. "Wembley was shaping up, but it needed to be global," he says. "We needed to do a concert in America too."

Geldof wanted the American leg to be in New York, but its stadiums were booked. American promoters Bill Graham and Larry Magid found the John F. Kennedy Stadium in Philadelphia, which has the same five-hour time difference as New York. This meant both concerts could easily take place within 24 hours. Once Philadelphia was confirmed, Bowie and Jagger wanted to duet, with Bowie singing in England and Jagger in the US. But how would they sing together, given the time delay in getting satellite pictures from one continent to another? "We couldn't work out how bad the time lapse would be," chuckles Goldsmith. "Eventually, we decided one of them would have to go up in a space rocket. We called NASA. To my amazement they took us seriously, so we started having an earnest discussion about how Jagger could sing in outer space."

The practicalities of giving astronaut training to a Stone meant Jagger ended up in Philadelphia after all, as did several British artists. "We'd rather have played Wembley," says Simple Minds guitarist Charlie Burchill. "But *Don't You…* had gone to No.1 in the US and Bob was slightly struggling to fill the American bill. We asked him who was picking the bands, and Bob said, 'It's my ball, I'm in charge.' His hustle and directness made me think it was going to be something special. It felt that there was a great cultural shift, that people on the ground could make governments change."

Paul Young, at that point on a US tour, admits he tried to get shifted on to the Philadelphia bill, having agreed to play Wembley. "It cost a fair whack flying my band home from the States," says Young. "It was only when I saw a Live Aid documentary years later that I realised all the logistics of those schedules, and I understood why Bob said no."

With Dylan, Tina Turner and Madonna playing, Live Aid US was a worthy companion to Wembley. Geldof began talking to TV companies but, for once, his ambition wasn't high enough. Goldsmith recalls:



“BOB TOLD FREDDIE, ‘YOU’LL DO IT OR I’LL JUMP UP AND DOWN ON YOU’”

MIDGE URE

© Getty

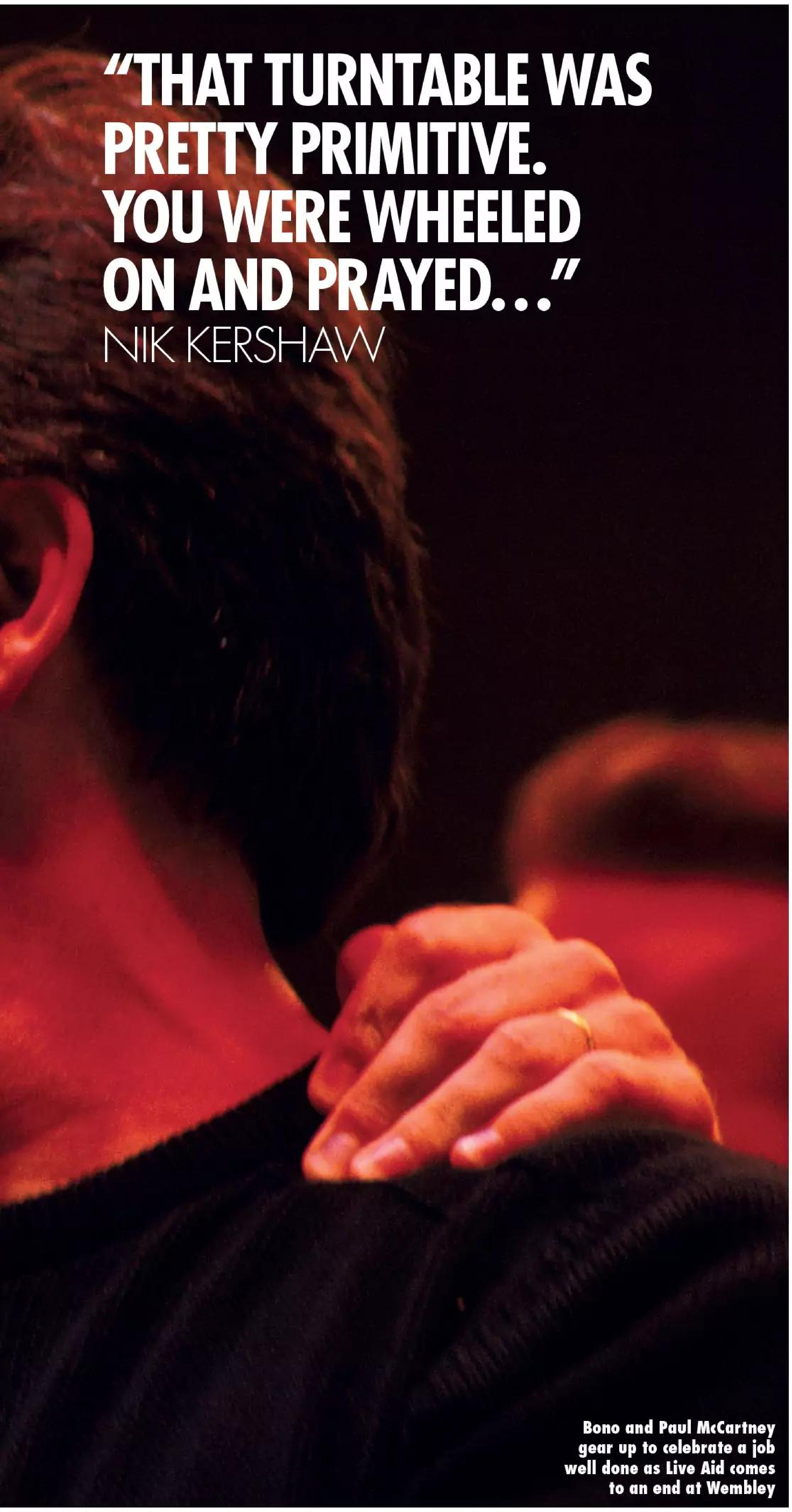
Queen took some persuasion, but went on to steal the show at Wembley

© Getty

"Bob talked to Channel 4 about a two-hour highlights show. I told him 'That's no good. You'll have a show covered in adverts, it'll look horrible.' "The pair went to see Michael Appleton, producer of *The Old Grey Whistle Test* at the BBC, and daytime schedule controller Roger Lawton. "Bob did his best Passionate Bob number and Roger instantly became a big supporter," laughs Goldsmith. "Roger went to Michael Grade, the BBC's Director General, to talk about clearing the schedules for the full 16 hours of both shows. After 48 hours, Michael phoned me to say 'Why not? Let's do it!'"

The job of presenting 16 hours of live TV from what was becoming the biggest concert in history went to the *OGWT* hosts: Mark Ellen, David Hepworth, Andy Kershaw and Janice Long. "The BBC weren't across music the way they are now," says Ellen. "Anybody with a leather jacket and a guitar case would be sent to *Whistle Test*'s office, as nobody else knew how to deal with them. So we were given Live Aid, which just got bigger and bigger. I was on holiday on Sark and Dave Hepworth phoned to tell me how big the audience was going to be, in incalculable billions. I went to a meadow and lay there, feeling really quite faint."

Meanwhile, artists began planning their setlists. Bowie was filming *Labyrinth*, so his touring band were working with other musicians. His bassist, Matthew Seligman, recommended Thomas Dolby. "I'd assumed Bowie would be a bit mad, like in



> **“THAT TURNTABLE WAS PRETTY PRIMITIVE. YOU WERE WHEELED ON AND PRAYED…”**
> NIK KERSHAW

Bono and Paul McCartney gear up to celebrate a job well done as Live Aid comes to an end at Wembley

Cracked Actor,” admits Dolby. “But he was very gracious and respectful – more Edward Fox than Rupert Everett. At first, we rehearsed his new single *Loving The Alien*, but once he realised the scale of Live Aid he saw a hits set was best.”

By now, Live Aid was able to start cherrypicking artists. According to Midge Ure: “Pete Townshend said he’d do it, and was told ‘F*** off, unless it’s The Who.’” Despite splitting in 1982, The Who were in. So were Led Zeppelin, in Philadelphia. Playing their first show since John Bonham’s death five years earlier, Zep hired two drummers; Phil Collins and Chic’s Tony Thompson. Collins was also due to play with Sting at Wembley. “Phil’s manager, Tony Smith, was my ex-business partner and he was being awkward,” grumbles Goldsmith. “After much discourse, Tony said Phil would play, but only if he could do something different. I asked ‘Like what?’ and Tony said: ‘If he can play England and the US.’ I said ‘OK, done,’ and luckily British Airways loved the idea, so they loaned us Concorde.”

Goldsmith remembers that Paul McCartney was hardest to persuade. Geldof offers a more surprising reluctant conscript: Bryan Ferry. “I love Bryan, but he’s a total ditherer,” he chuckles. “He was going ‘Oh, er, hmm…’ So at the press conference, I finished the names of performers by saying ‘Oh yeah, and Bryan Ferry…’ Bryan rang, going ‘I didn’t say yes!’. I told him ‘Well, you tell the world you don’t want to help.’”

It was down to Goldsmith to ensure artists didn’t over-run. A giant turntable was installed at Wembley: whoever was on stage at the front, the next act behind them, ready to be cranked into place as soon as the current artist’s time was up. “I bought 40 massive clocks and stuck them everywhere,” he says. “Every dressing room had a notice: ‘I don’t care when you go on, but I do care when you get off. Stick to time!’”

Nik Kershaw: “That turntable was pretty primitive. You were wheeled on, prayed the gear was in the right place and that some of it was working.” Inevitably, it broke down during rehearsals; “The crew had had it at that point,’ Goldsmith recalls. “I helped them put it back together. I was so optimistic after that, I spoke to Bob at 2am and suggested we might raise £5 million.”

In America Rod Stewart, Prince and Springsteen were still in negotiations; Tears For Fears cancelled with 24 hours’ notice when some of their touring band quit, replaced by George Thorogood. “I got a call at 2pm the day before,” says Thorogood. “We were in San Francisco, 3,000 miles away, and hadn’t played in a while, but we were able to get a midnight flight. I had to find a barber real fast before that flight. It was going to be on TV all over the world and I’ve got to keep up appearances.”

The instability of the US show was a concern. “America is terribly parochial, even today,” continues Goldsmith. “Because Live Aid was invented here and not in America, they had some reticence. I sent half my team over to make sure they were on it. Maybe it was the running order or the line-up, but it didn’t have the same excitement as Wembley.”

Having toured in February, The Boomtown Rats also played Glastonbury in June. Bassist Pete Briquette summarises life in a band with Geldof at the time: “We’d get a phone call during rehearsals and it’d be the Pope. We were trying to work out a chord sequence and Bob was fielding calls from a Saudi prince offering the use of six planes.”

For his part, Geldof couldn’t wait to put organising Live Aid aside to get on stage again. “I knew that, to the punters, it would be, ‘Here’s the guy who organised all this, hurrah for him’, but I’d be with my band. I knew I could do that, at least.” On top of the mental strain, Geldof was in agony with a bad back. “The night before, I was shitting myself,” he says. “It was the same fear as I’d had the day of Band Aid: what if nobody else turns up?” In case he got night sweats, Geldof once again slept on white towels. ■

The man who started it all… Bob Geldof on stage at Wembley Stadium

© Getty

HOW IT HAPPENED

A cast of Live Aid's biggest stars remember the making of the greatest live event in musical history

13 JULY 1985, WEMBLEY STADIUM

12.02pm: *After The Coldstream Guards perform God Save The Queen, Status Quo open Live Aid with Rockin' All Over The World.*

Francis Rossi: *"Bands are funny buggers, always wanting to go on last. There'd been a lot of jockeying for position, managers saying, 'We can't go on before them, we've had more Top 10 singles this year.' And we just went, 'We'll go on first, thank you very much.' You go on first, everyone around the world is watching, but none of the other acts realised they'd shot themselves in the foot."*

Tony Hadley, Spandau Ballet: *"When Quo's manager volunteered them to go first, everyone else went, 'You what?!' Then when they did Rockin' All Over The World, me and Janice Long were stood backstage going, 'Woah!' They were fantastic."*

Harvey Goldsmith: *"It wasn't until we got Quo's setlist that we all realised that of course they were the right band to go first. Once you've seen Rockin' All Over The World is the first song, what other number could you open with?"*

Steve White, The Style Council: *"We were nervous, watching Quo. Usually at a festival, there's 5,000 people queuing for a drink and 3,000 for the toilet, but absolutely everyone was watching Quo. The atmosphere was so enthusiastic, but there was a slight worry of 'What if they all scarper when we come on?'"*

Francis Rossi: *"Once we'd finished, generally every band realised ' Shit, we should have opened.' They'd all been: 'Fine, dear old Quo can open.' But whilst we're on, no other f***er is on that stage and we're going to own it. Besides, it meant we were finished by 12:15 and could have a proper drink. Lovely."*

12:19 *The Style Council perform four songs.*

Steve White: *"You can tell how nervous we were, as we played the songs twice as fast as usual. The most obscure song we played, Internationalists, was Paul Weller's dig at the Royal Family being there. I remember him glaring up at the Royal Box for its lines about equality. We'd asked if we could go on early as we'd wanted to enjoy the rest of the day as punters, but then we got booked to do a TV show in Maidstone to play our new single, Come To Milton Keynes. That was a real let-down, and you can see on YouTube how flat that TV performance was. But we got back to Wembley by about 6pm and had a blast."*

12:44 *Bob Geldof gets back to being a pop star with The Boomtown Rats for three songs.*

"WE WERE FINISHED BY 12:15 AND COULD HAVE A PROPER DRINK. LOVELY."

FRANCIS ROSSI

© Getty

OPPOSITE: Adam Ant performs his single song, *Vive Le Rock*

Bob Geldof: *"A few minutes before we went on, David Bowie massaged my back. That was pretty wild. Bowie massaging my back? Surely that should have been the other way round. I was proud when the Rats went on. Unlike the rest of the day and the weeks leading up to Live Aid, I was quite secure on that stage. I had total confidence in the guys behind me. I was a pop singer again. Live Aid was a really weird day, but once I heard 'Bob, you're on', I walked out and you can see my head clear: 'Oh yeah, I'm a pop singer with these guys.' And we were good."*

Garry Roberts: *"I wanted us to blow everybody else off stage. That's always there. I wanted us to show that we're great and everyone else is shit."*

Pete Briquette: *"I just felt the luckiest person in the world to be there and our show went in a flash. But we must have been good, because as we came off Garry said to Bob, 'You did it!' and he'd never said anything complimentary to Bob before."*

1:01 *Adam Ant plays new single Vive Le Rock, and will be the only artist whose sales went down the week after Live Aid.*

Adam Ant: *"I was meant to do four songs, but other acts had bigger egos and wouldn't let the number of their songs be cut. I didn't mind that, but Live Aid was a good idea that went badly wrong. If all the money from the box office doesn't go to starving children, it's a different ballgame. Record companies jumped on the idea as a good way to sell records while feeling good about themselves, and I don't want any part of it."*

1:17 *Midge Ure pauses overseeing Band Aid to play four songs with Ultravox.*

Midge Ure: *"We were shitting ourselves, as we refused to use backing tapes. Everything was stripped down to the bare minimum. We knew our place in the pecking order, but for a band who weren't expected to be anything special, we held our own."*

1:46 *Spandau Ballet perform two hits plus Virgin, which was never released as a single.*

Steve Norman: *"It was so monumental, but you didn't have time to think. No one cared who you were. Once you were done, you were yanked off and no one pampered you when you came off."*

John Keeble: *"When we finished, I got a cab home to Camden to shower and then come back. London was deserted, as everyone was watching Live Aid. It was like Day Of The Triffids. Camden to Wembley usually takes an hour, but it took nine minutes. It was fantastic to see it from the outside."*

> "I WAS MEANT TO DO FOUR SONGS, BUT OTHER ACTS HAD BIGGER EGOS AND WOULDN'T LET THE NUMBER OF THEIR SONGS BE CUT"
>
> **ADAM ANT**

Tony Hadley: *"One of the biggest rows I've had with Gary Kemp was about Live Aid. We had dinner with Bob in Germany afterwards, and I said – trying to be controversial, I admit – that there was another agenda to Live Aid. It was the biggest pop event ever and millions of people were watching, so some bands were thinking, 'What a fantastic opportunity!' It ended with me and Gary yelling 'No, you shut up!' at each other. As for the day itself, I've still no idea why we didn't do Gold. It wasn't the sporting anthem it is now, but it was bigger than Virgin."*

2:22 *After Elvis Costello sings All You Need Is Love, Nik Kershaw plays four songs.*
Mark Ellen, Live Aid TV presenter: *"It was inexplicable that Nik Kershaw got four songs and Elvis Costello only got one, but Elvis stole the show by deciding to do All You Need Is Love with the lyrics written on the back of his hand."*
Nik Kershaw: *"You knew full well the whole bloody world was watching. And you were surrounded by your peers and legends you'd grown up watching. It wasn't the right place to make a prat of yourself, so my one motto was: 'Don't be shit.' It was the longest 20 minutes of my life and Live Aid summed up my 80s career: I didn't enjoy it as much as I should have. I forgot the words to Wouldn't It Be Good and it's just as well that was the last song. Nobody really noticed, but if it had been early in the set, the gremlins in my head would have been going, 'You're going to forget the words again.'"*

3:50 *After Sade and Sting, Howard Jones performs Hide And Seek.*
Howard Jones: *"It was the biggest gig I was ever going to do, and there I was on stage on my own as my band were back in the US and I had jetlag. I flew in with Queen on the helicopter. It's the only time I've been on a helicopter and Freddie Mercury was next to me! I was too freaked out by all of that to say anything other than a polite hello."*

4:38 *After David Gilmour guests with Bryan Ferry, Paul Young does four songs, including That's The Way Love Is with Alison Moyet.*
Paul Young: *"Bob was on stage just before me, saying, 'The whole world is watching.' Thanks Bob, no pressure! I loved it, but I had to leave straight afterwards as I had an early flight to get back to the US for my tour. My manager was going, 'If you wait until the end, the traffic will be a nightmare and you won't get home until 2am.' I was very sensible…"*

5:21 *U2's famous breakthrough performance sees Bono grabbing a fan from the crowd.*
Harvey Goldsmith: *"U2 had broken America, but they were still emerging in England until that show. Watching Bono climb all over the audience was wild."*
Mark Ellen: *"On the day, I'd thought U2 were a failure. The band were struggling, because they couldn't see Bono. They were hammering on, waiting for him to come back. I heard later that U2 went back to Ireland thinking they'd tanked their entire career. That's the magic of television: often things that don't work in real life are magnetic on TV, and vice-versa."*

6:00 *Dire Straits perform Money For Nothing with Sting and Sultans Of Swing before dashing off to their headline show at Wembley Arena.*
John Illsley: *"We made sure everything was OK at the arena in the morning, then walked across the car park to get to the stadium. No one batted an eyelid – on a day like that, nobody knew or cared what Dire Straits were up to. It felt like once we were on, we were straight off again, but our own show at the arena was fantastic. 12,000 people had come to see us instead of Live Aid, and if they were anything like me they wouldn't have known how to set the timer on their videos to watch it later.*

Nik Kershaw, who sang four songs in "the longest 20 minutes" of his life

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> "I FORGOT THE WORDS TO *WOULDN'T IT BE GOOD* AND IT'S JUST AS WELL THAT WAS THE LAST SONG. NOBODY REALLY NOTICED."
>
> **NIK KERSHAW**

We owed them a good performance, and it was a pleasure to play."

6:20 *On the TV broadcast between Dire Straits and Queen, presenter David Hepworth is about to read the address for donations when Geldof interrupts him, yelling: "F*** the address, let's get the numbers!"*
Bob Geldof: *"The money coming in wasn't what it should have been. It was quicker to donate by phone. After that interruption – and Queen – people gave money."*
Mark Ellen: *"It was interesting, because nobody at the BBC really reacted. Everyone knew he'd said it in the heat of the moment. What registered more was how upset Bob was. He was worried that everyone was watching, but no one was giving any money. The audience were treating it like a free show. After that speech, the average donation was £25, the same price as a ticket for Wembley."*

OPPOSITE: Midge Ure and Bob Geldof looking pretty exhausted on stage at Live Aid

6:41 *Queen do six songs.*

Simon Crowe, The Boomtown Rats: *"Bob's dad was gobsmacked by Queen, saying to everyone afterwards, 'What an amazing voice!' It was really touching to see him so impressed because, while I never asked him what he thought about the Rats, he wasn't usually very impressed by modern music."*

Howard Jones: *"Every single musician was going, 'How do you top that?' It was the ultimate."*

Midge Ure: *"That's where Freddie Mercury should have been all his life, the audience in the palm of his hand."*

7:22 *David Bowie plays four songs before showing a famine video soundtracked by The Cars' Drive.*

Harvey Goldsmith: *"Three weeks before the show, David and I went through about 50 news clips from Africa, going, 'Can we do something with this one?' It was the music that initially pricked us up for The Cars. David said, 'I'll drop a song, but you have to put that on.'"*

Thomas Dolby: *"Bowie only decided his setlist that morning. We'd rehearsed those four songs, but only individually, not together. I flew in the helicopter with him, and that was the only time he was angry, as he hated flying. He was chainsmoking, even though the pilot was telling him to stop, and muttering 'Are we nearly there?' the whole journey. We got escorted by police motorcyclists to the stadium, and Bowie loved that! The show went as well as it could, and Bowie was really pleased. I sat behind him in the VIP enclosure after, and I heard him ask Princess Diana if she'd come on stage for the finale. She said, 'I might be able to sing a bit of God Save The Queen, but that's as far as my vocal talents go, I'm afraid.'"*

9:51 *After Elton John and a somewhat ragged return by The Who, Paul McCartney plays live for the first time since 1979, singing Let It Be.*

Harvey Goldsmith: *"There'd been a really massive build-up to getting Macca back on stage, then somebody tripped over a cable feed in the distribution box so he had no microphone. Terrific!"*

9:54 *Wembley ends with whoever can be rounded up singing Do They Know It's Christmas?*

Simon Crowe: *"About half-an-hour before the end, Bob ran over and said: 'My back is gone, would you mind being musical director?' I said 'Sure', and then it hit me – 'Hang on, I'm going to have tell all these legends what to sing? Shit!' I got through on sheer panic. Bowie was perfect for the opening line, but after that it was instinct – 'How about you do this?' I felt like Forrest Gump. I've dined out on that anecdote ever since,*

"THAT'S WHERE FREDDIE MERCURY SHOULD HAVE BEEN ALL HIS LIFE, THE AUDIENCE IN THE PALM OF HIS HAND"

MIDGE URE

© Getty

OPPOSITE:
George Thorogood, who replaced Tears For Fears when they dropped out at short notice

me telling Bowie, Macca and Daltrey what to sing. I played drums with Stewart Copeland for the actual performance. He acted like he could barely tolerate me, staring into the middle distance like a supermarket checkout girl."
Francis Rossi: *"Everyone was elbowing their way to be near to the mic, especially Sting. I find all that extremely embarrassing, so I was at the back, but Rick Parfitt was going, 'Sod you, I'm as good as you are', getting him and his wife right up the front."*
Bob Geldof: *"Me and Harvey sat on the drum-riser at the end of the show, looking at all the rubbish and going, 'Well, that's that, then.'"*
Steve White: *"The aftershow was at Legends, a nightclub in the middle of town. Me and Mick Talbot went, but Paul went home to his missus. I remember talking to Robbie Coltrane at 3:30am and then getting the nightbus home. Oh, the glamour."*
Bob Geldof: *"I was in no state to enjoy it, I was totally drained by that point. I did my best and a lot of people had a good party that night."*

13 JULY 1985, JOHN F. KENNEDY STADIUM, PHILADELPHIA

8:51am (US time) *Before the show's official start, 18-year-old David Weinstein persuades promoter Bill Graham to let him sing two songs under the stage name Bernard Watson, having camped in the queue for a week. Weinstein sings his own song, Interview, and Bob Dylan's All I Really Want To Do. Although Weinstein sang at a Miami school reunion in 2012, he has effectively vanished since, with no online presence. Efforts by Classic Pop to contact Weinstein via his old school proved fruitless.*

1:26pm *After sets from Joan Baez, The Hooters, The Four Tops, Billy Ocean, Black Sabbath, Run-DMC, Rick Springfield, REO Speedwagon, Crosby, Stills And Nash, Judas Priest, Bryan Adams and The Beach Boys, it's the turn of Tears For Fears' late replacements George Thorogood And The Destroyers. Guest presenters on stage include Jack Nicholson, Chevy Chase and George Segal.*
George Thorogood: *"It was brutal – 100°F in the shade, and we were on at the peak of the day having had no sleep. Jack Nicholson helped. He came over just before we went on and said, 'Georgie! I always follow the rough boys.' He looked like he was wearing a bowling outfit with his black-and-white shirt. Although we were late additions, we were fortunate enough to get a great reception."*

2:07 *Simple Minds play three songs, opening with the then-unreleased Ghost Dancing.*
Charlie Burchill: *"We were recording in Woodstock and had just written Ghost Dancing. We didn't think it was going to be our next big single, we just wanted to work out how to play it live. We ran over our time a bit. Bill Graham was yelling over at our manager, who ignored him,*

"IT WAS BRUTAL – 100°F IN THE SHADE, AND WE WERE ON AT THE PEAK OF THE DAY HAVING HAD NO SLEEP"
GEORGE THOROGOOD

Destroyers

© Getty

© Getty

mouthing, 'Too bad.' After a good party, we drove back to Woodstock in the dead of night going, 'Did that just happen?'"

2:41 *The Pretenders play six songs.*
Rupert Black: *"The hotel where all the bands stayed was so bizarre. Over breakfast, you'd see Ronnie Wood having muesli while Robert Plant was trying to find milk for his cereal. We were looking wistfully at the TV monitors showing Wembley, as the crowd there was so much more vibrant and colourful than at JFK, which was just a sea of anonymous people. Wembley was much more current than the heritage acts in Philadelphia. My keyboard was off for the first song, so I was basically banging on a plank, but I sprang to life in Message Of Love. To have had my moment of history was amazing; you can't get better than playing even a minute part in the biggest concert ever."*

4:27 *After Santana and Ashford And Simpson, Madonna plays three songs.*
Harvey Goldsmith: *"The TV coverage from the States started with Madonna's set. I was elated when the picture came on."*
Mark Ellen: *"In the stadium, Madonna's show was an absolute disaster. What that crowd wanted was rock'n'roll like Tom Petty, not some girl with two guys they couldn't really see, singing along to backing tapes. But on TV, it looked fantastic. The whole theatre of her show could be seen in one frame. You can't get George Thorogood And The Destroyers in one frame."*

5:30 *After Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers, Kenny Loggins sings Footloose.*
Kenny Loggins: *"It was such a rush to see so many artists gathered backstage. Some had entourages and bodyguards, but some you could walk right up to, like Teddy Pendergrass, who was my favourite anyway. The crowd were into whoever was up there, so it was really easy to play and that sea of people was a big turn-on. Afterwards, MTV told me I was needed and I ended up narrating MTV's backstage links with Sheena Easton."*

8:45 *Led Zeppelin's disastrous reunion comes in the middle of The Cars, Neil Young, The Power Station, The Thompson Twins, Eric Clapton, Phil Collins and Crosby, Stills, Nash And Young. Duran Duran follow, with Simon Le Bon hitting an infamously bad falsetto in first song A View To A Kill.*
Simon Le Bon: *"I hit the worst note I've ever hit in my life, in front of the biggest audience I'd ever played to in my life. I can't get away from that, it's something that'll always stay with me. I was aware straight away how bad it was. God, was I aware."*

"I HIT THE WORST NOTE I'VE EVER HIT IN MY LIFE, IN FRONT OF THE BIGGEST AUDIENCE I'D EVER PLAYED TO IN MY LIFE"

SIMON LE BON

John Taylor, Simon Le Bon and Andy Taylor of Duran Duran

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Nick Rhodes: *"My worst fear of being on stage, of not being able to hear anything, came true at Live Aid. I couldn't hear a damn thing and had to look at Roger Taylor to work out what the beat was. But I have good memories too. I was introduced to Mick Jagger, who introduced me to Bob Dylan, who promptly walked into a wall and cut his nose."*
9:20 *Patti LaBelle performs six songs.*
Patti LaBelle: *"I kicked my shoes off into the crowd and Rick James' sister Penny caught one. She called me after to tell me she had it, but I never got it back. Frank Moschino saw my performance and flew me to Italy to greet me with a roomful of presents, telling me I had a wonderful spirit. Does it feel like 30 years? It was the first time my son Zuri saw me play and he's all grown up now, so yes."*

9:50 *Hall And Oates play six songs.*
Daryl Hall: *"In most cases, the things people tell you are significant landmarks in your career you don't realise at the time. But with Live Aid, on the day I thought, 'This is huge.' Some people were nervous, some were aloof, but that's the way it always is when any group of people gets together, not just musicians."*

10:39 *After Mick Jagger and Tina Turner, Bob Dylan headlines with guests Ronnie Wood and Keith Richards.*
Mark Ellen: *"I've got a bootleg of Dylan's rehearsal, and it's just him gossiping with Keith and Ronnie. They never rehearsed properly at all. Ronnie told me they hit the hospitality tent quite hard and after Jack Nicholson introduced them, Dylan stumbles on 30 seconds later, saying, 'Hey! I'd like to bring on Ronnie Wood and Keith Richards. But I don't know where they are.' I watched it at Legends with Bob Geldof, who had a look of total astonishment at Dylan coming on for the big climax looking so pissed."* ■

CHAM
OF THE

Initially dismissed by Geldof, Queen's call-and-response performances dominated Live Aid

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PIONS WORLD

WE LOOK BACK AT SOME OF LIVE AID'S MOST MEMORABLE MOMENTS AND THE LASTING IMPACT THESE PERFORMANCES HAD ON THE LEGACY OF THE ARTISTS. IT WAS MAKE OR BREAK TIME ON THE WORLD STAGE.

FELIX ROWE

As morning broke on Saturday 13 July 1985, it was just another summer's day, full of promise. But as the sun went down that evening, the world would never be quite the same again. Live Aid was one of those Year Zero moments; a genuinely seismic event leaving an indelible imprint on the world.

While it's easy to get carried away with superlatives, no amount of hyperbole could do justice to the cultural behemoth that was Live Aid.

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OPPOSITE: **David Bowie caught the mood of the evening with *Heroes***

Almost two billion people – an estimated 40% of the world's population – tuned in to watch. It was literally the biggest pop concert ever.

It was also a fascinating experiment. The stars were already stars, yet pulling them all together in the same contained environment tested their mettle and demonstrated who was ultimately ready to stand up to the occasion – and who wasn't. Behind the scenes, agents schemed to secure their acts the best slots. But generally, it was a level playing field to prove one's worth in front of the biggest audience the world had ever seen.

On the global jukebox, each artist had to go in cold, win over a generalist audience who probably hadn't come to watch them specifically, and somehow cut through the noise. Fledgling careers were cemented and existing ones re-invigorated, while some took a bruising. It's a challenge to determine cause and effect. Did Live Aid make legends or did the legends make Live Aid?

IF YOU BUILD IT...

As nothing like it had been done before, it caught even the artists off guard. No one was really sure how to react, or what the lasting cultural relevance would be. Some waited cautiously to see who would make the first move – torn between not wanting to look like they didn't care, but equally not wanting to damage their reputation by association if the whole thing was a flop.

Bob Geldof's curatorial strategy wasn't concerned with taste or merit. He was more pragmatic. It was all about maximum exposure, snaring the biggest names in 1985's pop charts. In practice, that meant various 'legends' were overlooked as old hat, in favour of the freshest newcomers of the day. As a result, some young guns, whose time in the global spotlight would in hindsight prove relatively fleeting, were granted indulgent, eyebrow-raising primetime slots. While in contrast, seasoned veterans were either demoted to lesser slots (Status Quo playing first on the bill, though it worked out rather well for them), or else ignored completely (The Kinks, who weren't even invited). Even Paul McCartney only got one song! It was a mercenary approach, but that was the gig. As much as anything, Live Aid was a celebration of ephemeral pop in all its youthful exuberance.

Still, playing to the largest crowd in the world, it's amazing how many contemporary stars failed to play their biggest hits, opting for the latest single or relative obscurities – no *Gold* from Spandau, *Don't Go* from Alison Moyet, or *What Is Love?* from Howard Jones.

BEHIND THE SCENES, AGENTS SCHEMED TO SECURE THEIR ACTS THE BEST SLOTS

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN

With a rapturously received set, it is universally accepted that Queen owned Live Aid – objectively and unquestionably. The sea of raised hands during *Radio Ga Ga* and Freddie's trademark call-and-response interlude are genuine hairs-on-the-back-of-your-neck moments that go down in pop lore. The band themselves are certainly keen to reinforce that narrative. The iconic scenes formed a central thread of the 2018 biopic, *Bohemian Rhapsody*. Though the performance is recreated faithfully, there was poetic licence in their romanticised retelling of the event.

While the film liberally suggests "we haven't played together in years", in fact, they were a tight, well-oiled machine in 1985. If anything, they were a little tired from recent performances, following two huge nights at Rock In Rio in January, then extensive international touring throughout April and May in support of their hugely successful album, *The Works*.

So, legend has it, Geldof needed some serious persuading in order to put them on the bill, originally deeming them old news and past their peak. Still, they were hardly 'has-beens', riding a wave of recent big hits *Radio Ga Ga* and *I Want To Break Free* – both huge international number ones (even though the latter's cross-dressing video suffered a backlash in conservative America). Their riposte was a masterclass in execution, slaying the naysayers, and reminding everyone quite how formidable a live presence they were.

The Live Aid message also fed back into Queen's output. Freddie Mercury and Brian May performed *Is This The World We Created...?*, inspired by African TV newscasts, just before Macca's closing out. The whole experience clearly fired up Freddie, the message of hope and unity seeping into their next single, *One Vision*.

Surely, many who graced that stage in July '85 held ambitions of filling the stadium on their own merits. Queen were among the select few at that point who could actually pull it off, returning the following summer for an extended victory lap, immortalised on film and later released as *Live At Wembley '86*.

Even David Bowie would have had good reason to shrink at the thought of following Queen. (Joining forces for *Under Pressure* seems an obvious choice that didn't materialise on the night.) Bowie's song selection was characteristically abstruse, *TVC 15* bizarrely selected over crowd-

OPPOSITE: George Michael and Elton John, whose duetting at Live Aid helped launch Michael's solo career

pleasing greatest hits (in other words, no *Ziggy*). That said, his rousing rendition of *Heroes*, with the immortal line "We can be heroes, just for one day" was, of course, the perfect fit for the evening.

What's more, Geldof has recently suggested (on the *Q With Tom Power* podcast) that it was not Queen's legendary performance, but rather, Bowie's insistence on forgoing his final song to broadcast the devasting CBC footage of African famine, that actually made the phone lines melt.

Elsewhere, Phil Collins was the hardest working man in showbiz that day, pulling off sets with Sting, Eric Clapton and Led Zeppelin, no less, on two different continents. However, his apparent showboating drew mire from critics, and he drew much of the flak (perhaps unfairly) for Led Zeppelin's sloppy performance.

Another seasoned vet, who knew how to give a crowd what they wanted, Elton John put in a solid hits set, including renditions of classics *Rocket Man* and *Bennie And The Jets*. Backed by his super tight band, Elton was never phased by the magnitude of the occasion. Indeed, it's these very events in which he thrives.

The real landmark occurred, however, when Elton was joined by rising talent George Michael, for an anthemic take on *Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me*. It marked the moment when the Wham! heartthrob established himself as a fully-fledged solo star. It's a symbolic gesture, watching George Michael make his way to centre stage, while Andrew Ridgeley heads off to the back with the backing vocalists.

BOWIE'S ROUSING RENDITION OF *HEROES* WAS THE PERFECT FIT

The transformation was sealed with Michael's new bad boy image: stubble, aviators and 80s Elvis look. When you consider that he had only just turned 22, his command of the stage among such company is impressive. This was George's graduation, showing that he could be considered among the big players. Before long, he was duetting with hero, Aretha Franklin.

Like Queen, Wham! were another to sell out Wembley Stadium on their own accord in 1986. But it was clear by this point that George alone was on the rise, and Andrew Ridgeley had the dignity and humility to led his friend soar.

WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR

U2 were another top-tier act who can now clearly trace their ascent back to Live Aid. Already established in Europe and making inroads in the US, it was this event that ratified their transition to superstardom. Nevertheless, they thought they'd fluffed it on the day.

Feeling disconnected from the distant audience, Bono went AWOL into the crowd in search of an intimate

DAVID HEPWORTH'S INSIGHTS

David Hepworth is a broadcaster and journalist, and presented classic music show *The Old Grey Whistle Test* in the 80s. He was brought in to anchor the UK's TV coverage of Live Aid. Here, Hepworth shares his three key moments…

STATUS QUO

"The most important musical moment for me was the beginning when the ceremonial trumpeters gave way to Status Quo and they started with *Rockin' All Over The World*. There was no better band to start things off and no song that could ever be more appropriate. Oscar Hammerstein used to say, "give 'em a good opening number and they'll forgive you anything". This demonstrated the truth of Oscar's words."

LIVING IN THE MOMENT

"What I find myself reflecting on forty years later is that this miracle of logistics and favours, this massive demonstration of what they now call Nudge Theory, was accomplished without the use of a single mobile phone. If you were in Wembley that day, you didn't have the faintest idea of how it was being received in the outside world. That blissful ignorance is no longer possible. Nowadays we do everything while looking at ourselves in the mirror of our mobile phones."

QUEEN

"Watching Freddie Mercury work the crowd felt like witnessing the beginning of the Age of Spectacle with people coming together to feel themselves part of a massive ritual rather than just going along to listen to music. In the years between Live Aid and the present time, the discussion has changed from what things sound like to what they look like."

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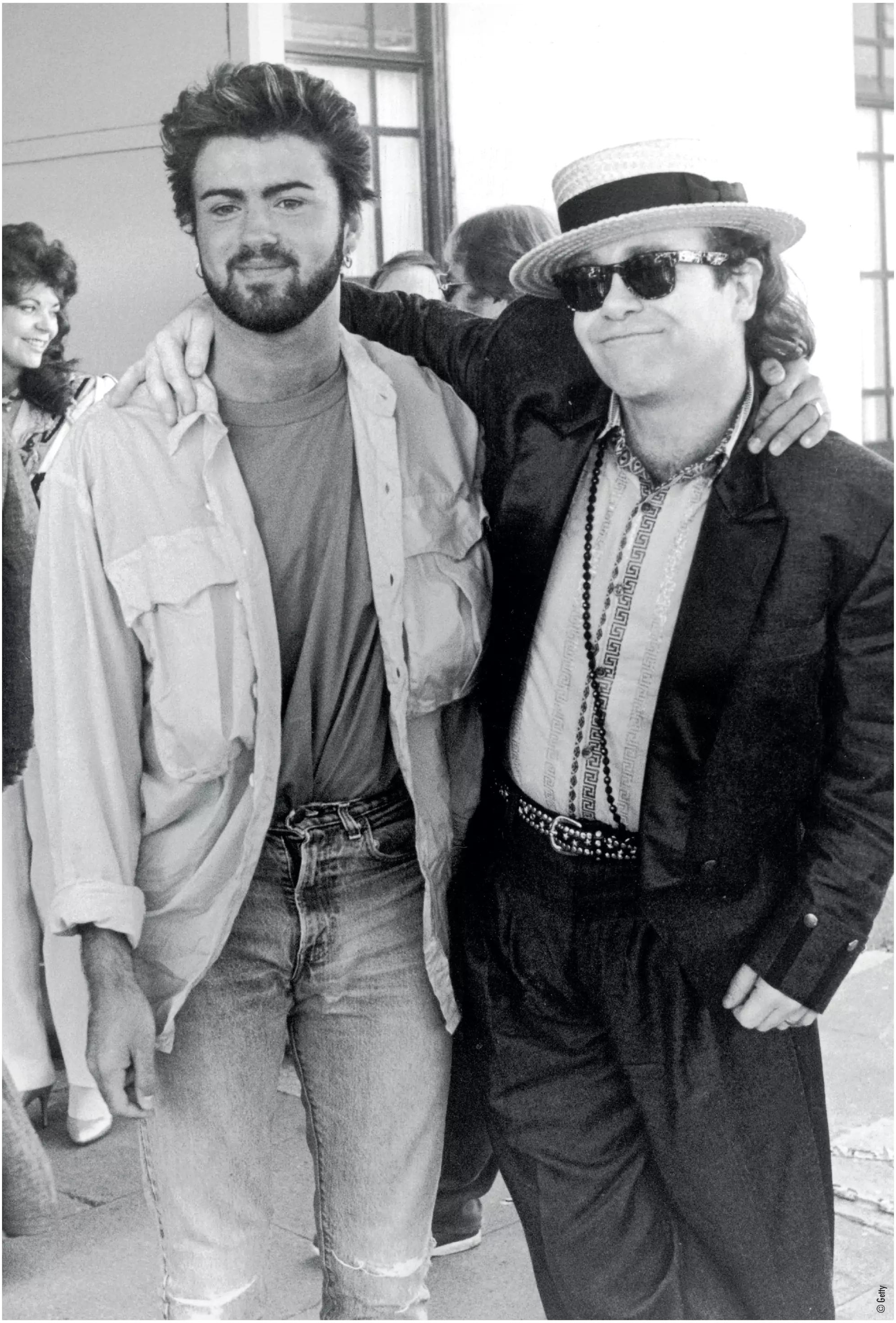

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OPPOSITE: U2's Bono on the Wembley Stadium stage

connection, leaving his bandmates in the lurch. The prolonged play-out of *Bad* left no time for the band's biggest single, *Pride (In The Name Of Love)*. The incident caused a backstage bust-up afterwards, furious they'd screwed up their big moment. But what felt like a mess on stage looked great on telly, creating a compelling buzz that resonated globally.

It's no coincidence that U2's landmark album, 1987's Grammy Award-winning *The Joshua Tree*, came next. The Live Aid experience was integral in making them think on that scale: direct, widescreen anthems designed to be performed in a big space. Bono has spoken of taking inspiration from his trips to Africa in 1985, exploring the theme of the desert as a metaphor – the Western materialistic 'moral desert' contrasted with the geographical one in Africa.

Live Aid kindled Bono's social and political awareness. He later helped set up the charitable ONE Campaign, and has become as closely aligned with poverty and famine relief as Geldof (taking as much heat from the critics). Unlike Geldof, his rock'n'roll ambitions came out intact, or even improved by the Live Aid association.

Many pop stars had their moment to shine at Live Aid. It was an event of collaborations: Bryan Ferry and David Gilmour; Phil Collins and Sting; Elton John and George Michael; Alison Moyet and Paul Young; Mick Jagger and Tina Turner. Sometimes collabs that seem good on paper can turn out to have about as much chemistry as a physics lesson. Thrusting two performers who have barely met together to perform a song that one of them doesn't care much for is not always a recipe for success. Mick and Tina, however, absolutely pulled it off in spades.

Paul McCartney brought the evening to a fitting conclusion with *Let It Be*; a star who needed no propping up, but nonetheless whose presence lent gravitas to the stage. Besides the functioning members of Queen, McCartney has become the go-to national ambassador to close out this kind of global summit (whether the Olympics or Jubilee). Live Aid was the landmark event that helped to cement that role.

A LASTING LEGACY

What a sight to witness all those stars singing along together (relatively) ego-free, despite some gentle jostling for the microphone, like a drunk karaoke for the song that started it all, *Do They Know It's Christmas?* It's easy to scoff, but it really was a defining moment in pop history. Live Aid set the template for the big charity extravaganza. And though various events have followed, each supposedly bigger than the last (from Live 8 to Live Earth), the original archetype remains the most resonant.

> IT'S EASY TO SCOFF, BUT IT REALLY WAS A DEFINING MOMENT IN POP HISTORY

The momentousness of the event as a pop culture phenomenon greatly outshone the message, but its legacy lives on. Bob Geldof made Live Aid, but Live Aid also made Bob Geldof. To the point where you forget he was ever even in a band (quite a good one). It was a long time since The Boomtown Rats had knocked *Grease* off the top spot to secure New Wave's first UK No.1. While Midge Ure was able to return to his day job, Live Aid turned Geldof into a world statesman. He had found a new calling. At the end of the night, a job well done but with plenty of work still to do, Bob Geldof turned to his wife with a smile, and said "Ho-hum, let's go home." ■

HERE COME THE GIRLS?

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In truth, women were poorly represented at Live Aid, with just Sade and Alison Moyet enjoying key roles at Wembley. (Annie Lennox was unfortunately forced to pull out on medical grounds.) Moyet had a particularly good time of it; the once shy bedroom performer and muse for Vince Clark's Yazoo, now found herself duetting with Paul Young (shown above), before returning to the stage for Paul McCartney's grand finale, beside David Bowie, Bob Geldof and Pete Townshend.

Philadelphia fared a little better with Patti LaBelle, the Pretenders and Tina Turner enjoying prominent sets. Madonna was the big diva of the moment; in her mid-80s prime, riding a wave of success following 1984's breakthrough record, *Like A Virgin*, she delivered a refreshingly raw performance that didn't feel overly slick, flanked by two backing dancers and with a live band. It captured Madonna's international career in relative infancy; on the up and unphased by the prospect of global superstardom.

Paul McCartney and David Bowie backstage at Wembley Stadium

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TOP 10 CONTROVERSIES

FROM DOUBLE APPEARANCES TO BACKSTAGE BANTER AND FLOPPED REUNIONS, WE PROVIDE THE LOWDOWN ON SOME OF THE GREATEST CONTROVERSIES OF THE BIG DAY ITSELF

FELIX ROWE

Singing a Christmas song in the height of summer – surely, there's no greater faux pas than that. Yet scenes of popstars rolling out of limos and helicopters, swigging champagne out the bottle in the morning sun, don't quite chime with the message of altruistic sacrifice to tackle hardship.

Alas, while no one could seriously doubt the sincerity of its organisers, various criticisms have been levied at Live Aid over the years. Artists benefiting from increased exposure? 'White saviour' accusations? Funds not reaching those in need? While many valid questions have indeed been asked about its broader legacy, this is not the forum for such debates. Our Top 10 focuses on the event itself and performances on the day.

10 BACKSTAGE SHENANIGANS

Despite inevitable rumours of a drug-fuelled ego-fest, in reality, backstage at Wembley Stadium was a relatively tame, jovial affair, with stars clubbing together and getting into a supportive spirit. If anything, the greatest backstage controversy is how good-natured it all was. The banter mostly involved Freddie Mercury, whether he was planting a wet kiss on photographer David Bailey, chatting up Bono, or putting Status Quo's Francis Rossi in a headlock. Elsewhere, Rossi told *Classic Rock* of a table collapsing underneath him and David Bowie just before the grand finale, and receiving the cold shoulder from Elvis Costello, too cool to say hello.

9 TECHNICAL ISSUES

A gig can prove a technical challenge at the best of times, but Live Aid was on a completely different scale: a gargantuan logistical feat with so many different configurations and quick switchovers, it was always going to be a recipe for disaster. Inevitably, there were problems: faulty monitors, out of tune guitars – and that's just Led Zeppelin. Elsewhere, Bob Geldof's microphone went dead during *Rat Trap*, so only backing vocals could be heard, and Paul McCartney suffered the same, briefly, on *Let It Be*. Worst of all, The Who's return could have been legendary, yet was blighted by gremlins, with the live feed going down during *My Generation*.

8 ONE SONG WONDERS

If the scheduling really was centred on cultural currency and showcasing the biggest names, then why did Adam Ant, Elvis Costello and Paul 'I was in The Beatles' McCartney perform just one song each, when the Boomtown Rats and Ultravox played three and four respectively? Ant has since branded the event "a waste of fucking time" (*Uncut*). For his part, Geldof would later argue that Ant was "over the hill" and said that he only conceded to grant him one song because Ant shared the same manager (Miles Copeland) as Sting – then, the bigger prize that Geldof really wanted to book. Ouch.

7 NO NEWS IS BAD NEWS

Huey Lewis And The News pulled out of the event over fears that funds were not going to the intended recipients. After performing on the USA For Africa single, *We Are The World*, Huey said: "The prudent thing to do is to see how that money translates into food for the people" (*Rolling Stone*). Yet one of that song's organisers, singer Harry Belafonte, shot back at Lewis' "divisive" comments, as "unfair to his colleagues and very unfair to the victims". Similar accusations against Live Aid would return again in years to come from various outlets, though Bob Geldof himself has remained pragmatic about the challenges of getting aid to those who need it.

Technical issues meant that The Who's return fell far short of what was hoped

© Getty

Swearing on live TV – not to be encouraged, but hey, it worked...

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6 GIVE US YOUR F***ING MONEY!

Everyone remembers Bob Geldof's infamous expletive-laden outburst on live TV, during an impassioned plea for donations: "Give us your feckin' money!" In fact, he didn't actually say that exact line; the contentious phrase was: "Fuck the address, let's get the numbers" delivered in growing frustration that viewers weren't pledging enough money. Not since the Sex Pistols turned the airwaves blue had such outrage been invoked pre-watershed. In fairness, the Pistols' example was a churlish wind-up following the presenter's goading, whereas Geldof's slip was delivered in genuine frustration for a worthy cause. It did the job. Following his intervention the money came rolling in.

Bob Dylan (here with Keith Richards) caused upset by asking for some money to go to US farmers

© Getty

BRITISH AIRWAYS
Hea
ALL DAY
ARTIST

Phil Collins travelled by Concorde in order to appear at both London and Philadelphia – not the most environmentally-friendly stunt.

© Getty

5 SNEAKY TACTICS

While giving credit where it's due, it's not unfair to say that the whole Live Aid spectacle was summoned into being on a tidal wave of blagging and bluster; its organisers infamously winging it to the last second. Announcing acts like Tears For Fears and Bryan Ferry before they'd even confirmed was a bit sneaky, and the shameless opportunism riled both acts. Adam Ant felt used as bait for initial promotion, only to be cast aside once more appealing acts came on board. It was an unwieldy beast, a runaway train just about clinging onto the rails, but the gamble paid off.

4 PHIL COLLINS' DOUBLE TROUBLE

Phil Collins is noted for appearing twice… on this list. After a prominent set with Sting at Wembley, Collins hopped into a helicopter, then onto Concorde and whizzed over to Philadelphia for another solo set, while also backing Eric Clapton and Led Zeppelin. It's just as well the charitable cause on this occasion wasn't about reducing one's carbon footprint. Somehow, Phil got a lot of stick for this stunt – perhaps a little unfairly – with the act perceived by some as ostentatious showboating. Still, two gigs on two continents in one day! He really was a ubiquitous omnipresence in the mid-80s.

Led Zeppelin's Live Aid reunion wasn't quite everything their fans would have wanted

© Getty

3 BOB DYLAN INADVERTENTLY INVENTS FARM AID

Geldof wasn't the only Bob to cause a stir. The voice of protest himself, Bob Dylan drew controversy during his Philadelphia closing set for an off-piste rant highlighting the plight of American farmers, suggesting that some of the money raised should go towards paying off their crippling mortgage debts. Although Dylan's comments were met with criticism at the time for veering off-message, they led to the setting up of Farm Aid, not long after, by fellow heavyweights, Willie Nelson, John Mellencamp and Neil Young. This is one controversy that led to something positive, and Farm Aid continues annually today.

2 LACK OF REPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN ARTISTS

One particularly valid criticism was the poor representation of African artists (a criticism that resurfaced at Live 8). The organisers' strategy of showcasing globally recognised acts in order to make the biggest noise inevitably meant a lack of representation. Equally inevitably, it fuelled the 'white saviour' accusations – the idea that Africans were incapable of saving themselves, requiring white rock gods to make everything better with a pop song. This isn't just a new gripe that developed in hindsight. It was raised at the time by Stevie Wonder, who pulled out on moral grounds, refusing to be the "token Black" artist.

1 LED ZEPPELIN'S STAIRWAY TO HELL

What Phil Collins expected to be a low-stakes jam with Robert Plant, soon ballooned into a much-hyped Zeppelin reunion – their first since the death of the irreplaceable John Bonham in 1980. Plant's vocal was shot and Jimmy Page was out of tune, while John Paul Jones did his best to hide. Page still blames Collins squarely for the trainwreck. Derided as one of the worst ever live performances by a top flight band, they've blocked official transmissions of the set since. But while sloppy by their own standards, one could argue it was everything rock'n'roll should be – dangerous, unpredictable and likely to fall apart at any moment. ■

Denis O’Regan launching his exhibition *Five Decades Of Rock Photography* in 2022

“THERE WAS NO EGO, BECAUSE THERE WERE TOO MANY OF THEM”

VETERAN PHOTOGRAPHER DENIS O’REGAN HAD AN EXCLUSIVE ACCESS-ALL-AREAS PASS AT LIVE AID. *CLASSIC POP* MEETS THE MAN WHO CAPTURED THE MOST INTIMATE MOMENTS OF THE DAY, TO DISCUSS STAR-STUDDED BARBEQUES, BINNING THE PHOTOS AND PHIL COLLINS NOT KNOWING WHO HE WAS…

JEREMY ALLEN

© Getty

Denis O'Regan is a man who has often found himself in the right place at the right time. Moreover, if he's not in the right place, then he will find a way to make sure he gets there. Live Aid's official photographer was born in Hammersmith in 1953, and it was at the nearby Odeon 20 years later when the lightbulb moment happened for him, watching David Bowie perform as Ziggy Stardust with his Spiders From Mars (the night before Ziggy killed the band, as it happened).

"I went with a friend to see him and that actually did change my life," says O'Regan from his studio in West London. "I saw this androgynous bloke doing mime and theatre with a rock band, and I'd never experienced anything like that before." He realised he wanted to document such shows as a way of preserving them which, as we will soon discover regarding Live Aid, wasn't always possible. Queen, in support of Mott The Hoople, was another band that blew his young mind. Thanks to talent and tenacity, O'Regan would end up touring the world with both Bowie and Queen in 1983 and 1986 respectively, with the latter tour the setting for his most famous picture.

"People often think that picture of Freddie [Mercury] leaning back was at Live Aid – they just assume that everything was Wembley Stadium but it was Maine Road in Manchester the following year. Freddie was in blue jeans and a T-shirt at Live Aid, he wasn't in the white trousers and yellow jacket which he's become synonymous with." He adds: "If anyone goes to a party as Freddie Mercury, that's how they're going to dress, and it's extraordinary, considering how many other looks he had."

Before the glamour of touring the world with the likes of The Rolling Stones, Duran Duran and Spandau Ballet, O'Regan cut his teeth as a punk photographer, shooting for the inkies on a freelance basis. That largely came about thanks to encountering and becoming friends with fellow snapper Chalkie Davies, who happened to be Phil Lynott's flatmate at the time (O'Regan not only got his shots in the *NME*, he also ended up on tour with Thin Lizzy). The 1980s then presented him with numerous opportunities, as he approached artists in order to tour with them, offering to split the profits on souvenir tour books such as *Serious Moonlight: The World Tour*: "David loved the idea, so he said, 'Yeah, great. I'll have someone document me for the first time.' So for a whole year, off I went."

Which brings us to Live Aid, the two-continent concert held on 13 July 1985. No personal profits would be made this time, of course. O'Regan remembers a hectic day where superstars mingled in the green room, though many of the specifics have been lost to time due to organisational oversights and differing priorities back in 1985. Here, one of Britain's most iconic photographers explains where things went slightly awry regarding the photographic documentation of the event…

How did you come to be Live Aid's official photographer?
The same thing that had happened with David Bowie happened with Bob Geldof and Live Aid. I knew Geldof from The Boomtown Rats in the punk days. When I approached him he said there'd be no book and no film, which I thought was a waste. So I said: "Why aren't you doing a book?" I can't repeat the

LIVE AID
ALL DAY
ARTIST
NEW YORK

Denis O'Regan with David Bowie, the man who helped inspire his photography career

Courtesy of Denis O'Regan

exact words but he said: “If you want to do the fucking book, you fucking do it.” I went off and brought in people to design it and got the publishers I’d used the year before, Sidgwick & Jackson.

You had a pretty full schedule at the time, didn’t you?
Yes, I was on tour with The Power Station in America, but I came back, shot the show, and then I went back out again. The book was out within two weeks, which was unheard of at that point. Just before I went back off on tour, the book was all done, I was ready to go, and I spoke to Geldof. He said, “I’ll fucking take it from here…” Well, he certainly did that, because he went to Sidgwick & Jackson and got a million quid advance for his autobiography.

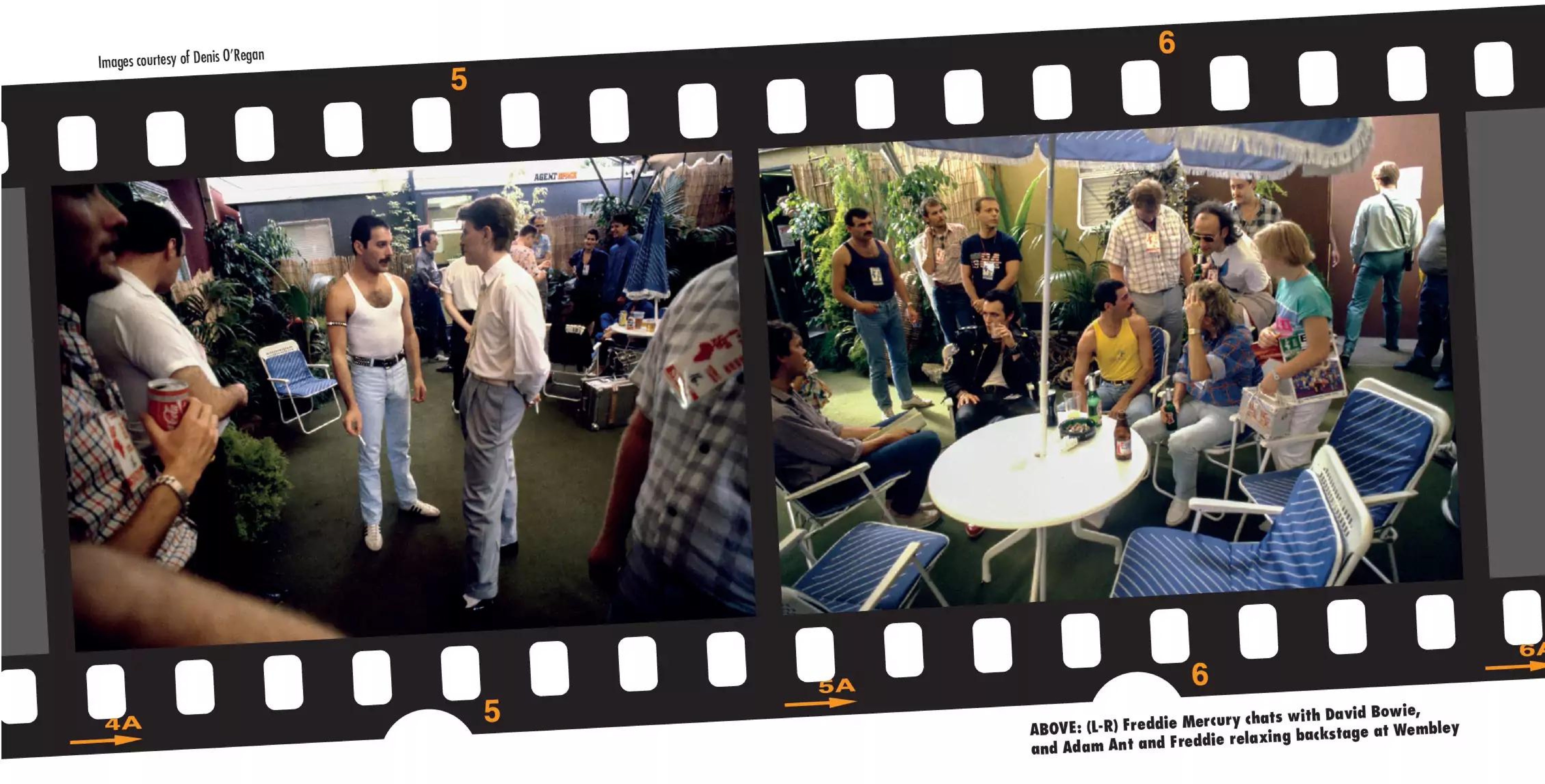
If you were on tour in America with The Power Station, wouldn’t it have been easier for you to shoot at the John F. Kennedy Stadium in Philadelphia?
The bill was way better here, in my opinion, than America. I just preferred the English bands, such as Queen. And that was the first time I encountered Freddie, holding court with his entourage backstage. You had Adam Ant at the end of the table, Billy no mates, and then I can see in one of my pictures that Sting is pushing past, and Paul McCartney was there with David Bowie. Elton John and George Michael were hanging out near the barbecue. It was all very low key but I think some of it was nerves, because no one knew how this was going to go, and they knew they were being broadcast worldwide, so you couldn’t make a mistake, really. It was actually quite laid back in terms of the way people behaved. There was no ego, because there were too many of them.

Did you appoint a photographer to do the same job in America?
Yeah, Adrian Boot, who did a lot of reggae. I may have asked other photographers, I can’t remember, but he was the one who ended up doing it andhe was reluctant to do it. That was the funny thing – a lot of people didn’t realise even until the day before that Live Aid was actually going to take place at all, let alone become as big as it became.

I appreciate it was all for a good cause, but it would have come at great personal expense to do it, I imagine?
Yeah, it cost me to fly back from America, but I wanted to do that.

> “A LOT OF PEOPLE DIDN’T REALISE EVEN UNTIL THE DAY BEFORE THAT LIVE AID WAS GOING TO HAPPEN”
>
> **DENIS O’REGAN**

Images courtesy of Denis O’Regan



ABOVE: (L-R) Freddie Mercury chats with David Bowie, and Adam Ant and Freddie relaxing backstage at Wembley

O'Regan's iconic shot of Freddie Mercury onstage at Earls Court Arena in 1978, sold at auction in 2016

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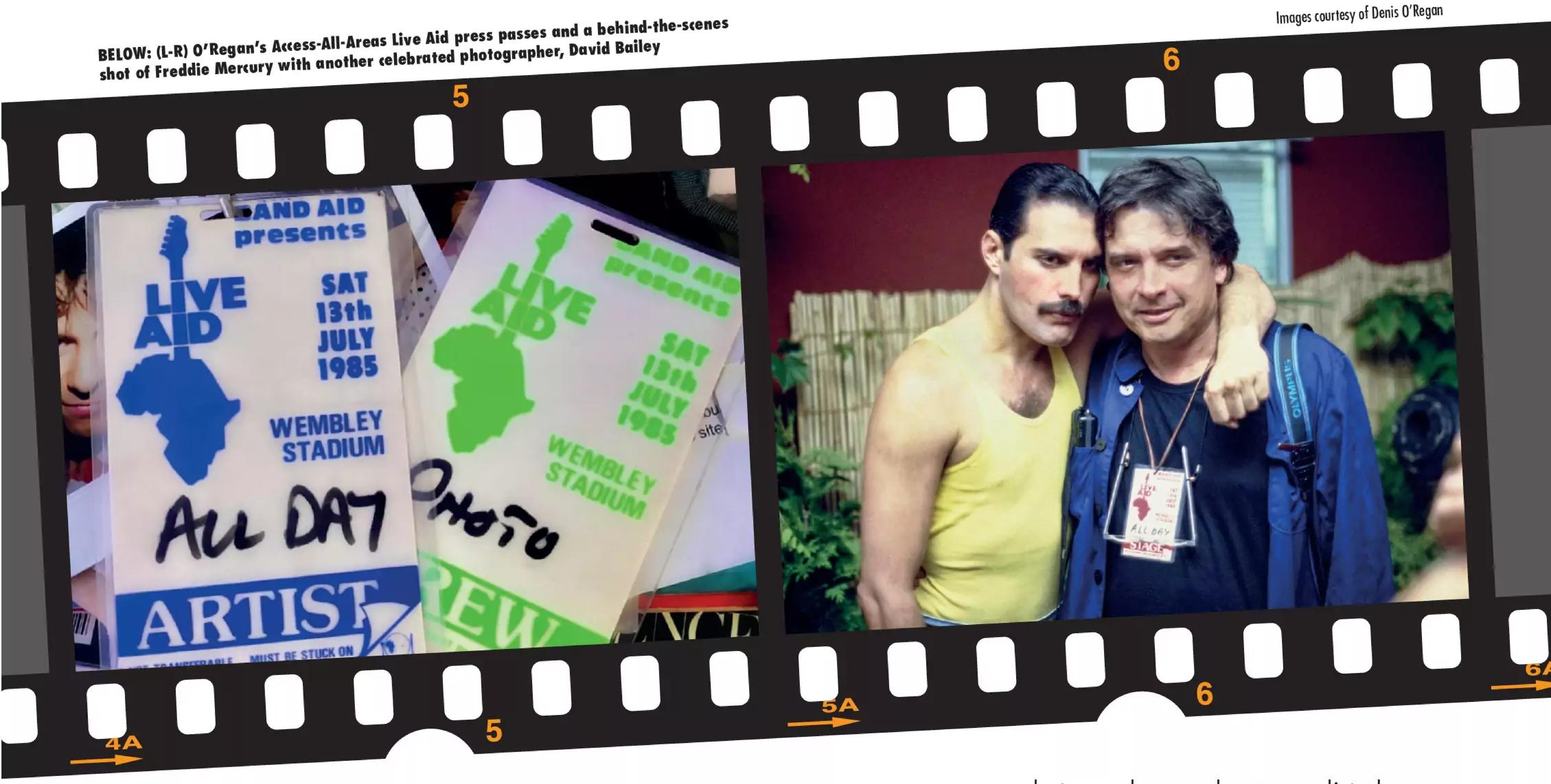
BELOW: (L-R) O'Regan's Access-All-Areas Live Aid press passes and a behind-the-scenes shot of Freddie Mercury with another celebrated photographer, David Bailey

Images courtesy of Denis O'Regan



"WITH 36 IMAGES ON A ROLL OF FILM, YOU HAD TO REALLY PICK AND CHOOSE YOUR MOMENTS"

DENIS O'REGAN

The point you bring up about the cost was really, really relevant to photographers, because you had to buy all that film in advance. And when you were shooting a show, you'd have two cameras so you could shoot one in colour, one in black and white. You had to buy all that film and have it in your bag. With 36 images on a roll of film, you had to really pick and choose your moments.

What was your motivation, aside from feeding the world?
I'd been on tour with Spandau in Japan, and Gary Kemp said to me: "We're heading back to London because Geldof wants us to sing on a charity single." It meant nothing, because charity singles hadn't really become a thing. Instead I stopped off in Hawaii, because it was on the way home. So having missed Band Aid, that was my motivation to do Live Aid.

You did most of your shooting backstage. What else do you remember of that day?
I think there were two backstage areas, and the one I was in had all the superstars, and I had an artist pass and a crew pass, so I had mega access. I didn't see the point of standing out at the front and photographing all these bands live with other photographers when I had such great access.

What's your favourite shot from the day?
To be honest, I don't have a lot of the pictures, because everything went into the book along with all the other photographers and we were listed together without accreditation for the individual shots. I only have a few pictures left over that I hung onto as mementos, luckily, because the Live Aid office allegedly put all their picture piles from all the photographers into dustbin bags and threw them out. Very sad. Such a shame for such a landmark event.

That seems like madness...
I don't think people ascribed a value to something that, as far as they were concerned, came and went, especially Geldof, saying there's no point filming it. I wanted to document stuff and preserve it for history in a way, but a lot of people didn't think that way.

One thing the 1980s had that we don't is Concorde! Did you encounter Phil Collins, the man who played both Wembley and Philadelphia on the same day?
I probably did, but as I say, I don't remember what I shot now. But there's a little bit of video on the internet that was shot backstage, and at one point you see Phil Collins talking to Gary Kemp and I'm in the background. And you can hear Gary go: "Oh, look, there's Denis." And then Phil Collins turns around, as if to go, "Who's Denis?" So I think that was my only encounter with Phil Collins up to that point, but I can't be sure because I haven't got – apart from a few memories – any documentary evidence. ■

© Getty

LIVE AID
LIVE AID

OPPOSITE: Concertgoers at the John F. Kennedy Stadium Live Aid gig

AGAINST ALL ODDS

BOB GELDOF MAY HAVE BEEN IN THE DRIVING SEAT FOR THE WEMBLEY SHOW, BUT OVER THE ATLANTIC THINGS LOOKED VERY DIFFERENT, WITH NO SHOWS AND LINE-UP ISSUES. *CLASSIC POP* RELIVES LIVE AID IN PHILADELPHIA – AND THE EVENTS THAT TOOK PLACE IN THE REST OF THE WORLD.

BETH SIMPSON

When we remember Live Aid the mental images that leap instantly to mind – Status Quo opening the event, U2, Queen's triumphant set, Bob Geldof swearing live on air, Paul McCartney's faulty mic – are all from Wembley. Yet that show only constituted half the whole event (less than half, if we count all the other mini Live Aids happening around the world). The other half took place over the Atlantic. Yet for one reason or another, and not just because as Brits much of it was screened past our 1985 bedtimes, it doesn't burn as bright in the memory.

Much of the Philadelphia leg was memorable. But in many cases not for the right reasons. And whilst it did its job in terms of raising money and making Live Aid a properly global happening, it wasn't quite the epochal, lump-in-your-throat event it perhaps should have been. The reasons why are complex.

After the recording of *We Are The World* in late January, the next logical step was a concert that would take the fundraising up a level. Geldof had already hooked up with Harvey Goldsmith to organise the Wembley gig. For the US concert, he turned to Bill Graham – the most formidable promoter of his generation, but by all accounts an irascible, downright difficult individual to deal with.

Graham's first task was to book a venue. After various New York stadia proved unavailable, he selected the John F. Kennedy Stadium in Philadelphia. Graham had promoted gigs there before, most notably The Rolling Stones in 1981. It had a capacity of 100,000, a generously spaced backstage area and, crucially, was free on 13 July.

The next stage was securing the acts. Given the wealth of recording talent on display at the *We Are The World* session you'd assume this wouldn't have been a problem. It was. That just three of the assorted megastars on that single actually played sets at JFK (Kenny Loggins, Daryl Hall and Bob Dylan) is still shocking. To this day, it's still something of a mystery how this came to pass.

"We went to all of the major Black acts who were popular at that time and they all said no," said Harvey Goldsmith in the 2005 BBC documentary *Live Aid: Against All Odds*. "We had this unbelievable discussion with Michael Jackson's people saying 'it's helping people in Africa' and he just wasn't interested.

"In America there was an agenda that was in a way brought from their Band Aid record [*We Are The World*] of that community of Black acts

© Getty

OPPOSITE: Duran Duran's Simon Le Bon and bassist John Taylor share a mic in Philadelphia

committing or not and it was like a bloc vote, and unfortunately the bloc vote went against doing the Philadelphia show." So not only was there no Jackson, but no Stevie Wonder or Diana Ross either.

"In effect," Geldof summarises in the documentary. "They – USA For Africa – didn't want to be superseded by something that in effect they thought was a Band Aid enterprise."

Interviewed before he died in 1991, Bill Graham was adamant he'd tried: "I contacted every single major Black artist... they all turned down Live Aid. [Local promoter] Larry Magid was a great help. He knew a lot of the Black acts and we got the Four Tops, Teddy Pendergrass, Ashford & Simpson and Patti LaBelle."

But it wasn't just artists of colour. With weeks to go, confirming any half-decent acts was a problem.

"America was horrendous," said Geldof in *Against All Odds*. "I was in a complete panic. I really did not sleep about America. We weren't kept in touch [by Bill Graham]. Harvey and I went there and it was a mess when we went into the office. Bill Graham was rude, and superior, and very distracted."

"AMERICA WAS HORRENDOUS. I WAS IN A COMPLETE PANIC. I REALLY DID NOT SLEEP." **BOB GELDOF**

"Bob thought Graham would go out and secure performers," said Michael C. Mitchell, Live Aid's TV executive producer, "and that's not what he did... Graham was not really participating."

Pete Smith, who was working with Goldsmith, went over to the States with a list of artists who were available. "He [Graham] said, 'I refuse to work with half of these people'. He being an optimistic kind of guy said, 'Well what about the other half?' Graham said, 'They refuse to work with me.'"

Even worse, it seems that Graham was actively trying to undermine the event. "We were hearing from some artists that he was telling them behind our backs that the show wouldn't take place," says Andy Zweck, Live Aid's production manager, "and it wasn't well organised and that they shouldn't participate and it would damage their careers. He put some artists off." Indeed Paul Simon pulled out, as did Huey Lewis And The News.

Then there was the figure that more than anyone Geldof wanted to secure: Bruce Springsteen. Then at the peak of his *Born In The USA*-fame, the Boss had just finished a run of UK stadium shows. But he had just got married and it seems had promised his new wife some 'us time'. Geldof stalked him, but to no avail: "We talked about everything except what it was necessary to talk about," he later said. "I was told later by a mutual friend that Springsteen regretted not sticking his guitar in the back seat and coming down. Pity." Springsteen agreed to leave his stage at Wembley for the concert, but the Philadelphia bill was poorer for his absence.

Eventually a line-up was cobbled together, but it was a hodgepodge. The Wembley bill had obviously had some care and attention taken over it – after Status Quo, the afternoon showcased the cream of current UK pop talent, which gave way to an evening devoted to rock legends: Queen, Bowie, The Who, Elton and McCartney.

But in the US newer stars nudged up against relics from the 1960s. Having eventually filled the bill, the concert was then extended back by three hours to accommodate those who had confirmed too late. Thus you had the ludicrous situation of Black Sabbath and the Four Tops – genuine legends in their respective genres – playing mid morning sets. Neither would be seen live in the UK.

British TV viewers were enjoying Spandau Ballet when the Philadelphia gig opened at 9am Eastern time. But the opening act wasn't an established

OPPOSITE: Michael Hutchence performs at Oz For Africa

artist. Bernard Watson was an 18-year-old singer-songwriter who had camped outside the stadium for days, so desperate was he to play. This had become a news story and with just days to go before the gig, Graham relented and granted Watson his 15 minutes.

He was followed by Joan Baez who was introduced by Jack Nicholson and performed *Amazing Grace*. "This is your Woodstock," she declared, not inaccurately in retrospect. "It's long overdue."

After her, The Hooters, Four Tops and Billy Ocean, came Sabbath. It marked the first time the four original members had played together since 1978 and being the rockers they are, they had been up all night. "We were all drunk when we did Live Aid," bassist Geezer Butler said in a 1997 interview with *Kerrang*, "but we'd all got drunk separately." Clearly old wounds hadn't entirely healed. Somewhat embarrassingly, MTV then showed an advert for the band's most recent album, *Born Again*, which featured ex-Deep Purple singer Ian Gillan in Ozzy Osbourne's shoes.

> "WE WERE ALL DRUNK WHEN WE DID LIVE AID, BUT WE'D ALL GOT DRUNK SEPARATELY" **GEEZER BUTLER**

Following Sabbath were Run DMC – the only hip hop act on the bill and an astute choice for the organisers – followed by more traditional fare in the shape of Rick Springfield, AOR stalwarts REO Speedwagon, Crosby, Stills & Nash and Metallica.

None were seen live in the UK. It wasn't until 5pm UK time (midday in Philadelphia) that we saw our first footage from JFK, in the form of Bryan Adams. It had been the Canadian rocker's breakthrough year and he knocked out a tight set that included his then-current single *Summer Of 69* as well as *Tears Are Not Enough*, the song he had co-written for the Canadian version of Band Aid. "I think Bob Geldof is a saint," he declared, a statement which in July 1985 did not sound preposterous.

Next up were The Beach Boys. *California Girls* was dogged by poor sound problems, but they recovered even if Brian Wilson looked distinctly ill-at-ease. Their sun-dabbled nostalgia went down like a mint julep on a hot day, which Philadelphia on 13 July 1985 most assuredly was.

Far more so than Wembley, the JFK line-up was a reminder that by 1985 pop was increasingly multi-generational. The New Wave kids, who can be seen in the footage singing along to Simple Minds and The Pretenders, would have surely turned their noses up at past-their-prime heritage acts like Santana or George Thorogood And The Destroyers, last minute replacements for Tears For Fears.

They would have been much more interested in Madonna, one of highlights of the Philadelphia gig. With a primetime slot in both Europe and North America, she despatched *Holiday* and *Into The Groove* like the superstar she was on the verge of becoming. The latter was released two days after Live Aid and within a month both singles were occupying the top two positions on the UK chart.

It should be remembered that throughout the day, interspersed with live footage from Wembley and JFK were clips from the various 'little' Live Aids that were happening (or had happened) around the world. These were, it has to be said, a mixed bunch. On the debit side, sandwiched in between Adam Ant and Ultravox at lunchtime, was footage from the Oz For Africa gig staged at the Sydney Entertainment Centre and a first chance for many UK viewers to glimpse INXS.

Later we get a 10-minute excerpt from the Japanese Live Aid, as well as Austria Für Afrika who perform *Warum?* (Why?). Amongst their number are members of Opus. Moustaches, mullets and headbands fill our screens.

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OPPOSITE: Madonna was one of the success stories of the US gig

We were also treated to Yugoslavia's contribution *Za Milion Godina* ('For A Million Years'), Stavanger For Africa from Norway, and the German version of Band Aid singing *Nackt Im Wind* ('Naked In The Wind'). Most interesting of all, there is a contribution from the Soviet Union, then in the very early days of glasnost. But UK viewers only saw the second of the AOR band Autograph's two numbers. Sadly, due to a tape error in Moscow, we get over two minutes of what appears to be a documentary about the Russian cherry harvest.

Back at JFK, the rest of the evening is remembered chiefly for what went wrong. Duran Duran were playing live for the first time in over a year and it showed. They opened with *A View To A Kill* – then No.1 on the Billboard charts – and were starting to sound like the returning pop heroes they were until Simon Le Bon delivered that bum note in the final chorus. "At the time I was absolutely mortified," said Le Bon later to the BBC. It would be the classic Duran line-up's last gig together for 18 years.

> "[LED ZEPPELIN] WERE IN A FUNNY MOOD DURING IT… JIMMY WAS DRIBBLING EVERYWHERE" **PHIL COLLINS**

Before that there was the debacle of the Led Zeppelin reunion. Under-rehearsed and unfocused, Robert Plant was hoarse and whilst the crowd predictably go bananas when Jimmy Page plays the intro to *Stairway To Heaven*, it doesn't presage the spine-tingling where-were-you moment it should have.

In years to come it would be Phil Collins – one of two substitute drummers for the late John Bonham at the show – who'd get the blame for their lacklustre performance. "Robert told me Phil Collins wanted to play with us," Page told *The Scotsman* in 2007. "I told him that was alright if he knew the numbers. But at the end of the day, he didn't know anything. We played *Whole Lotta Love* and he was just there bashing away cluelessly and grinning."

"They were in a funny mood during it," Collins later told the *Against All Odds* doc. "Jimmy was dribbling everywhere, Robert's voice wasn't sung in." Collins has said that he was toying with the idea of walking out mid-set but, wisely, thought better of it.

After nearly 16 hours, the final act arrives on stage. Bob Dylan is introduced by Jack Nicholson as "one of America's great voices of freedom". He brings on Keith Richards and Ronnie Wood for *Blowin' In The Wind*, but the two Stones don't appear to know the song. Dylan breaks a string and delivers the final chorus like a comically bad Dylan impressionist. Between songs he suggests that some of the Live Aid money could be diverted to US farmers struggling to pay their mortgages, a wholly inappropriate comment given the genuine humanitarian disaster going on in Ethiopia at the time.

And before we know it we reach the finale: *We Are The World*. Individual lines are sung by Lionel Richie (who hadn't performed a set of his own), Harry Belafonte, Chrissie Hynde, Kenny Loggins, Joan Baez, Dionne Warwick and Sheena Easton, with the chorus bellowed out by all. Mick Jagger can be glimpsed in the background, jigging about and clapping. At the end Richie thanks the crowd and bids farewell.

It was a thrown-together ending for a thrown-together gig, one best known for its oh-dear moments than transcendent ones. But despite it all, despite Bill Graham, despite the notable absences, despite the under-rehearsed performances, the crucial thing was that it happened. The US kept up their end of the bargain: millions were raised and the Philadelphia gig, for better or worse, has gone down in pop history. In the end that was enough. ■

Did Queen rocking Wembley lead to stadium rock's subsequent musical dominance?

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LIVING LEGACY

LIVE AID RAISED OVER £100 MILLION FOR AFRICA AND SAW A RAFT OF CLASSIC PERFORMANCES. BUT ITS UNINTENTIONAL LEGACY WAS TO HELP USHER IN STADIUM ROCK AND WORTHY CHARITY SPECIALS. AND WHAT *WAS* THE AIM OF LIVE 8? *CLASSIC POP* INVESTIGATES THE AFTER EFFECTS OF LIVE AID – AND ASKS WHY NOBODY CAN WATCH IT IN FULL ANYMORE.

JOHN EARLS

The week Live Aid took place, Duran Duran were clearly the biggest band in the world. Not only was *A View To A Kill* at US No.1, supergroup The Power Station were climbing just outside the Billboard Top 10 with *Get It On*.

While it's a stretch to say Live Aid directly caused Duran to implode, the band were never the same again afterwards: Roger Taylor immediately disappeared from public view for the next 18 years, while Andy Taylor didn't play with Duran Duran again until 2003. Simon Le Bon's infamous missed note in *A View To A Kill* became known as "The note heard around the world" and didn't help their fractious relationships either. As Le Bon told *Classic Pop* a decade ago: "I hit the worst bum note I've ever hit in my life in front of the biggest audience in my life, and I can't ever get away from that."

Duran's fate was emblematic of how Live Aid ushered in a sea change in music. Before the concerts at Wembley and Philadelphia, the 80s were about colourful individualism, the idea that anyone could be a star if you had a unique identity. Yet, with U2 and Queen generally perceived as the day's biggest successes, music shifted towards a uniform triumphalism. Live Aid killed off Adam Ant as a commercial force too, and the mainstream removal of Adam hardly benefitted mavericks in pop.

As John Taylor put it to *Record Collector* in 2023: "Music became very political right after Live Aid. Music became about a message, and certain artists were really able to seize that moment. Peter Gabriel was already there, but suddenly the language he'd been speaking became the global music language.

"Simple Minds did a bit of a pivot. They were an art-school, very interesting post-punk band, but they definitely met the stadium moment with *Mandela Day* and *Belfast Child*. Not that either song is my favourite Simple Minds music."

That transformation from experimental synth-pop to earnest stadium rock typifies how Live Aid showed musicians that being Very Serious Indeed was the way to get ahead. John Taylor is hardly being catty in criticising *Mandela Day* and *Belfast Child*. The latter might be Simple Minds' only UK No.1 single, but the band themselves don't think *Street Fighting Years* is a patch on *New Gold Dream*.

As an old punk, you can hardly blame Bob Geldof for skewing Live Aid's line-up to his most successful friends. But the biggest band and most exciting talking point in

Madonna's performance with Nile Rodgers and Thompson Twins showed her understanding of the TV, rather than venue, experience

© Getty

LET IT BE
THE Sun
FERRY AID

Band Aid inspired many, many more charity singles, and Live Aid did the same for concerts

Britain the year before Live Aid was Frankie Goes To Hollywood. Why weren't they upstaging Elvis Costello at Wembley? What could have been their greatest moment was sadly lost to internal issues, but there were plenty of other more interesting performers who might have made the day.

Since it first began regularly hosting concerts in 1975, by Live Aid Wembley Stadium had only attracted a certain type of rock as headliners: The Who, The Rolling Stones, Bruce Springsteen, Bob Dylan, Crosby, Stills & Nash. It wasn't until Wham! headlined in 1986 that Wembley hosted anything you'd class as pop music.

In the same way as Band Aid spawned the rash of charity singles from the likes of Ferry Aid, Farm Aid and Voices Of America, so Live Aid led to the era of stadium benefit shows: The Nelson Mandela 70th Birthday Tribute in 1988, Silver Clef Award Winners Concert in 1990 at Knebworth, 1992's Freddie Mercury Tribute Concert. All the shows were for a good cause, but worthy events make for worthy music. You were never too far away from Pink Floyd, Dire Straits or Genesis. Indeed, when Pet Shop Boys were invited to play at the Freddie Mercury concert, they said no on the basis they didn't think their take on Queen would be suitably funereal. (The duo disliked *We Are The Champions*, with Chris Lowe telling *Electronic Beats* in 2012 "That wasn't right" of Mercury singing "No time for losers" at Live Aid.)

Despite not featuring FGTH or Wham!, it would be wrong to claim Live Aid wholly rejected flamboyant pop. Nik Kershaw and Howard Jones were at Wembley, while Billy Ocean, Run-DMC and Thompson Twins got to play at Philadelphia.

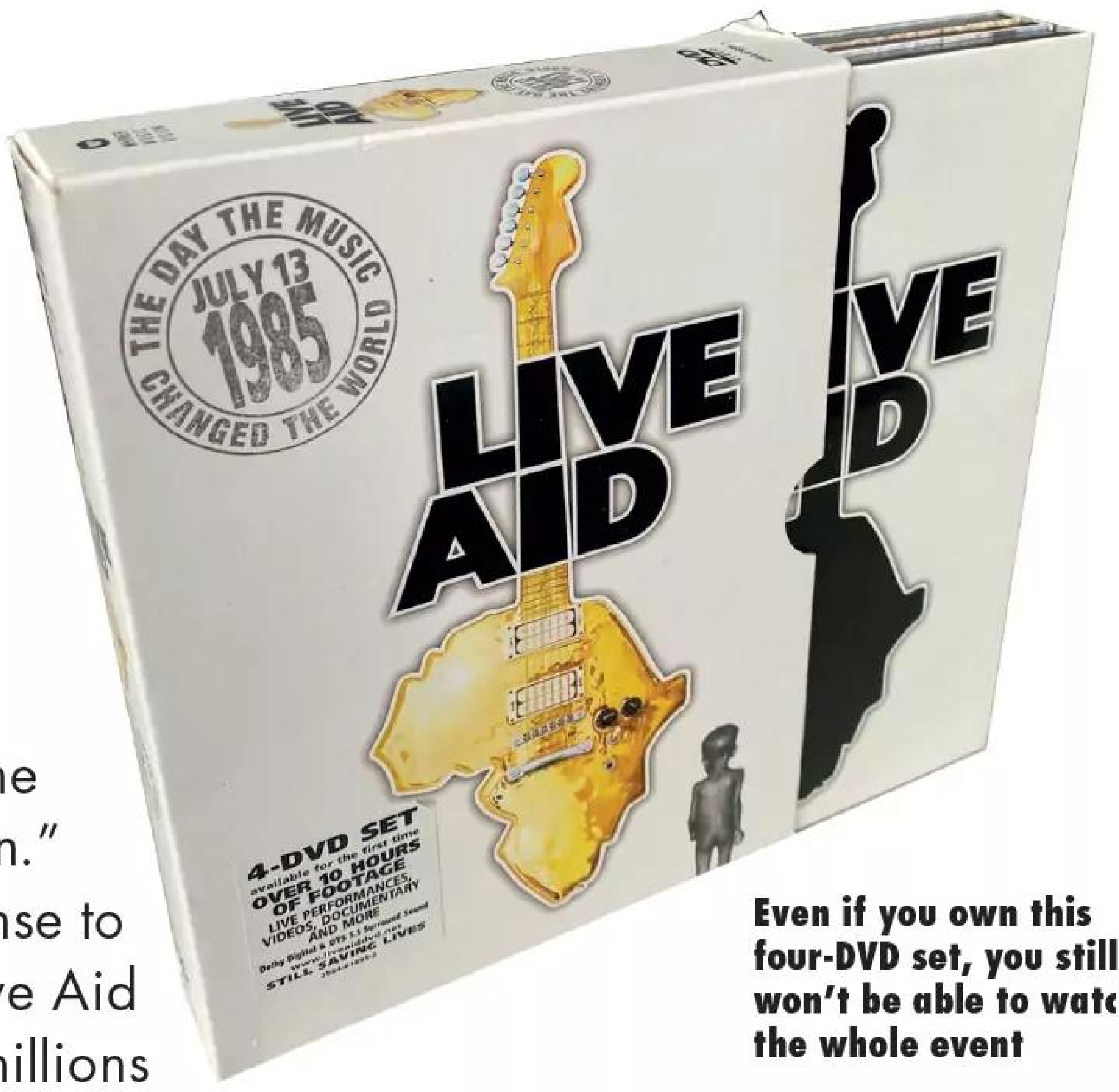
> **"[AFTER LIVE AID] MUSIC BECAME ABOUT A MESSAGE, AND CERTAIN ARTISTS WERE REALLY ABLE TO SEIZE THAT MOMENT"**
> JOHN TAYLOR

And then of course there was Madonna, the week before *Into The Groove*'s release. It's become a pop quiz staple that Thompson Twins and Madonna guested in each other's sets. That might look curious 40 years on, but the impact of the Twins' US stadium shows around *Into The Gap* shouldn't be overlooked – overseen by Joe Leeway with his background in theatre, they were an early example of the theatrical pop experience that's since become routine but which was revolutionary in 1985. It was only fair that Madonna paid tribute to an influence on her own concert staging.

Madonna's performance, featuring Thompson Twins and Nile Rodgers on *Love Makes The World Go Round*, was a genius piece of showmanship precisely because it was so minimal: while everyone else at John F. Kennedy Stadium was aiming their performance at the crowd, Madonna's set was instead honed for maximum impact on what would look spectacular on global viewers' television sets. Why have an overly busy stage when you've only got three songs, if all the viewers are seeing is what's in front of them?

Financially, Live Aid of course did all it set out to and more. It raised an estimated £114 million, after an initial £40m on the day. The Band Aid Trust continues to raise funds to fight famine. There is however a debate that Band Aid and Live Aid helped foster the patronising image of Africa as an infantilised continent which relies on the help of Western saviours. Live Aid was so successful that charity adverts to raise funds in Africa still use the concert's images of starving children as their benchmark.

In 2023, Africa No Filter head Moky Makura told *The Guardian*: "Live Aid remains the unfortunate and inadvertent poster child for a development approach to Africa that still drives much of the sector today; the desire to identify and fix the challenges of poor countries and the belief that money is the primary solution." Geldof's response to critics is that Live Aid "helped keep millions of people alive."



Even if you own this four-DVD set, you still won't be able to watch the whole event

"LIVE AID REMAINS THE UNFORTUNATE POSTER CHILD FOR A DEVELOPMENT APPROACH TO AFRICA"
MOKY MAKURA

The simplicity of Live Aid's message and imagery was in contrast to Live 8. With the new Wembley Stadium still being built, Coldplay, Travis, Keane, Mariah Carey, Elton John with Pete Doherty, Robbie Williams and Madonna all performed at Hyde Park, while Philadelphia hosted Kanye West, Will Smith, Kaiser Chiefs, Linkin Park with Jay-Z and Stevie Wonder.

The perception that Live 8's pressuring of the G8 summit in conjunction with Make Poverty History wasn't as easy a concept to grasp as combating famine in Africa – simplistic to the continent as that may have been – contributed to the concerts raising a relatively slight £11m. At least Pink Floyd reunited with Roger Waters for their final performance. Nick Mason told this writer last year: "All four of us doing something for the good of mankind was a fitting end for the band."

On a purely musical basis, there's one peculiar manner in which Live Aid's legacy remains incomplete. The musical *Just For One Day* opened in the West End at Shaftesbury Theatre in May. The BBC is showing more than six hours of Live Aid highlights on the 40th anniversary, as well as a documentary about the concerts. Yet it's impossible to see absolutely everything from Live Aid. Geldof had promised performers the shows would only be broadcast once. Live Aid was never to be repeated. The BBC kept its tapes. But US broadcaster ABC wiped its recordings and, although MTV kept their broadcast, many songs were cut short by ad breaks. It meant that only 10 hours from the full 16 hours of performances were able to be included on the four-DVD boxset released in 2004. And even that was deleted years ago. Live Aid, as Geldof vowed, really was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. ■

OPPOSITE: 2005's Live 8 experience didn't have the impact of the original

© Getty

MISSING IN ACTION

BOB GELDOF WAS A FORCE OF NATURE, NAMING ARTISTS PUBLICLY FOR THE SHOW BEFORE THEY'D EVEN AGREED TO PLAY. BUT THERE WERE SOME WHO MISSED OUT FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER – AND LIVED TO RUE THE DAY. *CLASSIC POP* REMEMBERS SOME OF THE BIGGEST ARTISTS WHO TURNED DOWN LIVE AID.

JAMIE ATKINS

Did Prince think he was too badass for a charity concert?

© Getty

Michael Jackson on set for *Captain EO*, which contributed to him missing Live Aid

© Getty

Bruce Springsteen was exhausted from the *Born In The USA* tour (pictured) but contributed sets and rigging

© Getty

For Queen and so many others, Live Aid was a sliding doors moment in their career. Road-weary and concerned they'd look passé when compared to pop stars of the day, Freddie Mercury and band considered turning the gig down. Of course, sense prevailed and their Live Aid set reminded the 1.9 billion-strong global audience of their live prowess. But some of the world's biggest artists decided not to play and stuck to their guns – here are 10 of them.

MICHAEL JACKSON

The King Of Pop was conspicuous by his absence at the US leg of Live Aid, held at John F. Kennedy Stadium, Philadelphia, not least when stars including Lionel Richie, Tina Turner and Dionne Warwick performed USA For Africa's *We Are The World*, co-written by Jackson and Richie. Jackson's press agent was forced to issue a statement claiming that Jackson was, "working around the clock in the studio on a project that he's made a major commitment to… Michael couldn't turn his back on his responsibility to the people he's working with." The project in question was probably the 3D film *Captain EO*, shown at Disneyland and Disney World from 1986, though writing for *Bad* was also underway and rumours persisted that Jackson was unhappy with the lack of Black performers at the show.

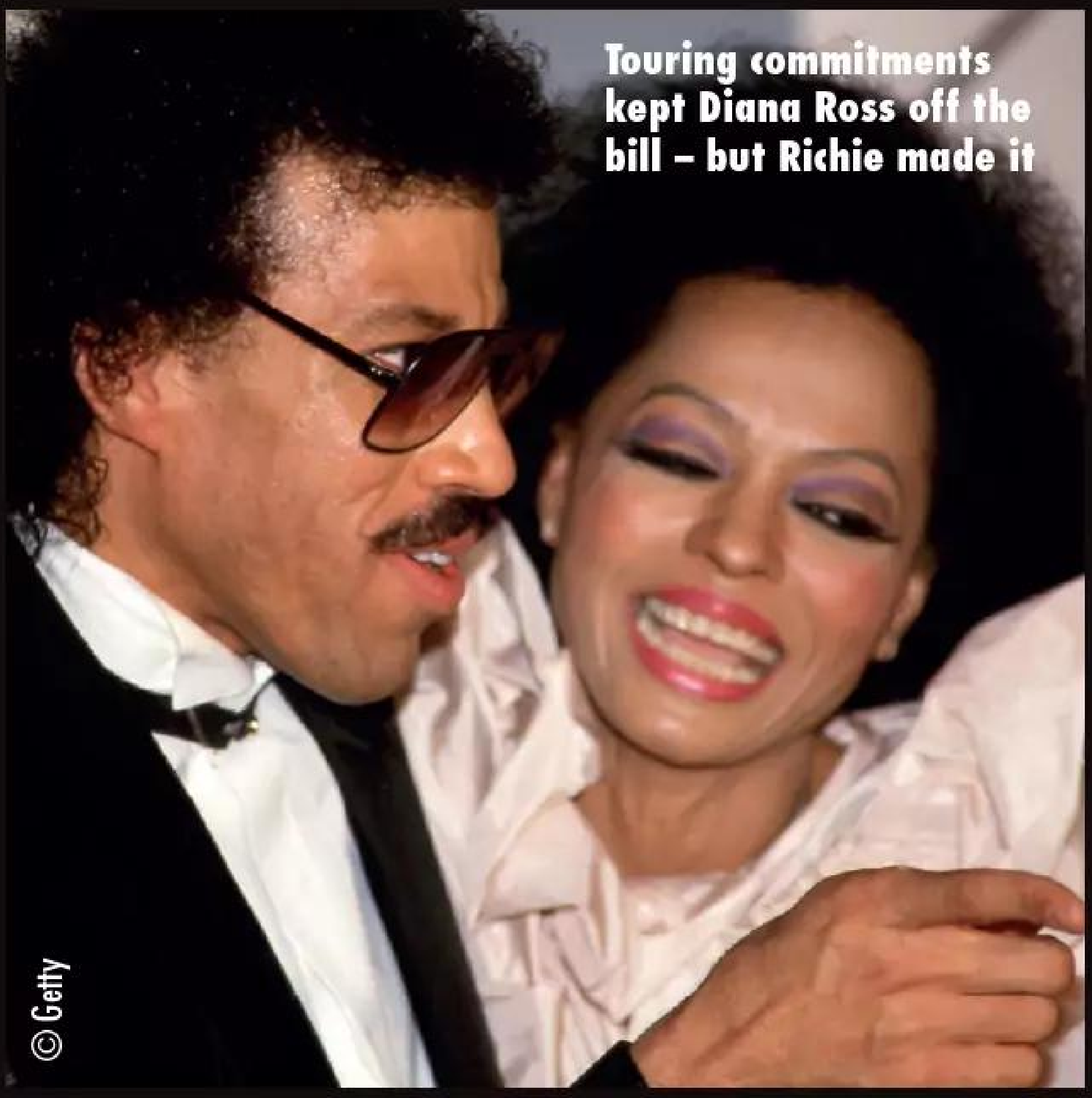
PRINCE

With Jackson busy, Prince could've seized the day and made a play for pop supremacy. But he'd already made his feelings known on *We Are The World* by missing its recording, instead contributing his own song, *4 The Tears In Your Eyes* to the project's album. In Alan Light's book *Let's Go Crazy*, former guitarist Wendy Melvoin suggested Prince thought it wasn't up to scratch, "He thinks he's a badass and he wanted to look cool, and he felt like *We Are the World* was horrible." When it came to the Philly show, Prince contributed a video performance of *4 The Tears In Your Eyes* but his absence was felt.

Stevie Wonder was allegedly upset at the show's lack of Black performers

© Getty

"STEVIE WONDER PHONED ME UP AND SAID, 'I AM NOT GOING TO BE THE TOKEN BLACK ON THE SHOW'"
HARVEY GOLDSMITH


Touring commitments kept Diana Ross off the bill – but Richie made it

© Getty

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

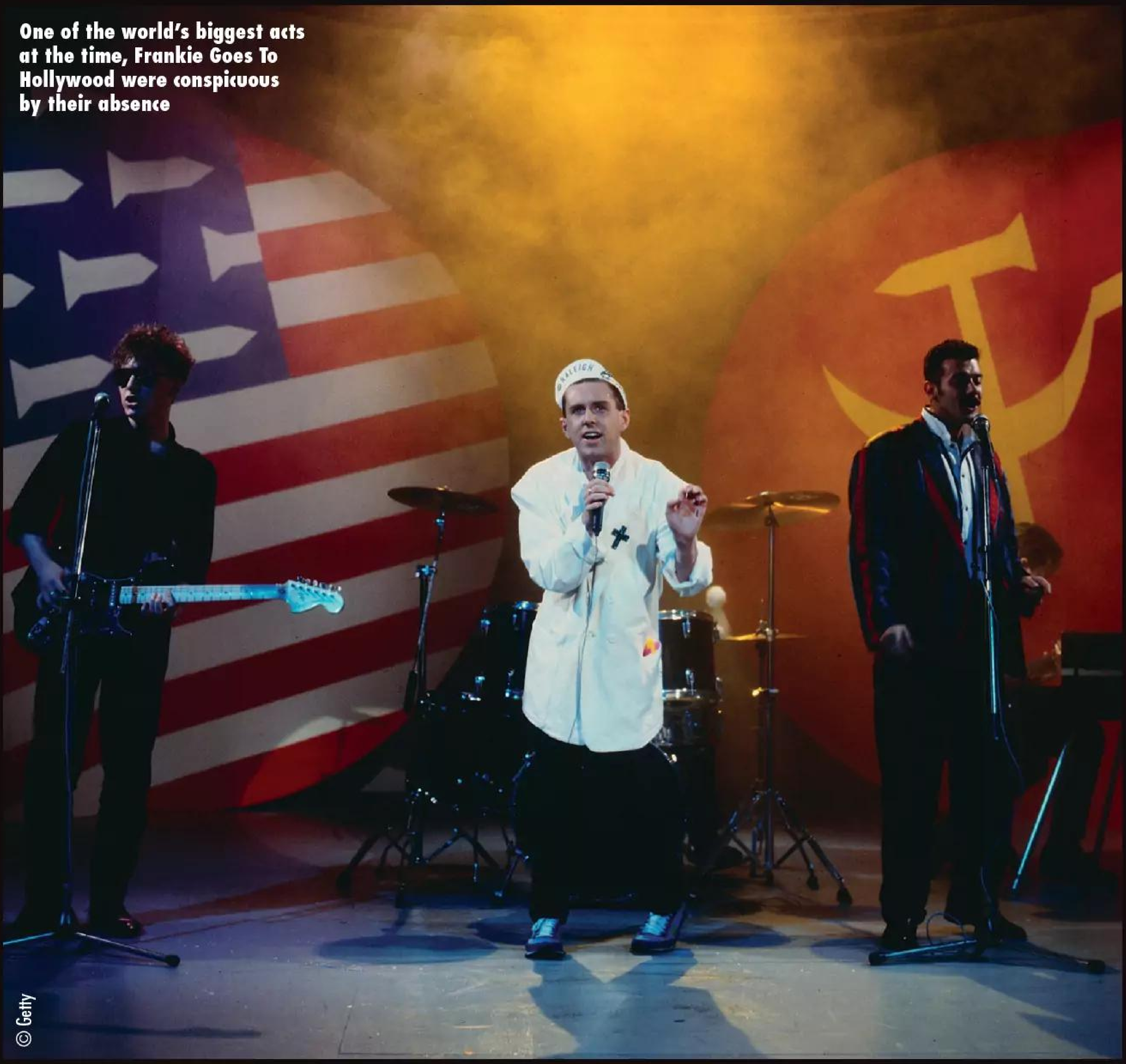
With Springsteen one of the biggest live draws on the planet and gig-ready from his massive *Born In The USA* tour, he seemed a shoo-in. But Live Aid fell during a break between his tour's European and North American legs and the exhausted and newly married star was keen to spend time with his wife before getting back on the road. Springsteen has since said he regretted not playing, but he did contribute to the cause – he'd left his stage and rigging at Wembley Stadium following his 4 July show.

DIANA ROSS

The early 80s saw Ross truly establish herself as a solo star, with a string of hit albums starting with 1980's Chic-produced *Diana*. Her 1984 album *Swept Away* included the Lionel Richie-written tribute to the late Marvin Gaye, *Missing You*, so it's conceivable that the former Commodores frontman might've persuaded her to join him on *We Are The World* at Live Aid, but touring commitments took priority and the ex-Supreme missed the show.

STEVIE WONDER

Interviewed for Dylan Jones' book, *The Eighties: One Day, One Decade*, promoter Harvey Goldsmith said that Stevie Wonder's decision not to play was down to the bill's lack of Black performers. "Stevie Wonder eventually agreed to appear," claimed Goldsmith, "but then he phoned me up and said, 'I am not going to be the token Black on the show.'" Though it's been claimed that Wonder and Michael Jackson shared the same viewpoint and were acting in solidarity, neither performer commented publicly.



One of the world's biggest acts at the time, Frankie Goes To Hollywood were conspicuous by their absence

© Getty

ROD STEWART

With recent hits including *Baby Jane* and *Some Guys Have All The Luck*, Rod The Mod was another natural for Live Aid, but it took him decades to realise why he missed out. "We actually were supposed to do it," Rod Stewart told the BBC in 2021, "but our ex-manager turned it down because I wasn't getting the right news coverage. He only wanted me to do it if I got on the CBS news at 10 o'clock… That's not what it was all about. It was to raise money for kids. It wasn't about what news channel you were going to be on in America. I only just found this out. I thought it was weird that I didn't do it."

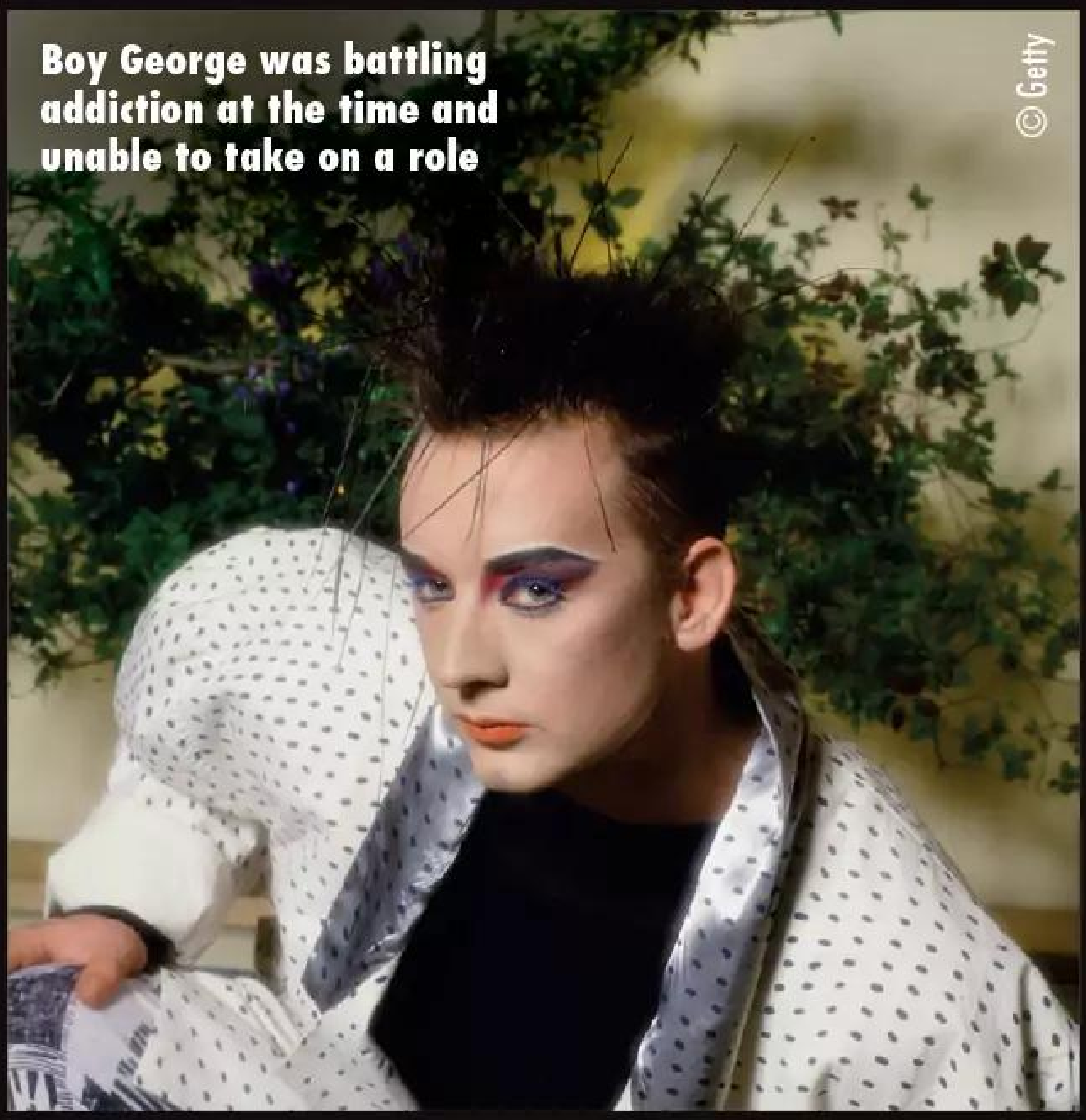
EURYTHMICS

Released in April 1985, *Be Yourself Tonight* – the fourth album from Annie Lennox and Dave Stewart – was a huge success, reaching the Top 3 in the UK and Top 10 in the US. But no tour followed, thanks to Lennox's continuing recuperation from vocal fold nodules. The condition also meant that Live Aid was a non-starter.

> **"I MESSED IT UP. I WAS OTHERWISE ENGAGED CHEMICALLY… I WASN'T IN A FIT STATE TO DO IT."**
> BOY GEORGE

CULTURE CLUB

Though Boy George was one of the stars of *Do They Know It's Christmas?*, he was struggling with substance abuse in his personal life. "I messed it up. I was otherwise engaged chemically," he told the *Grounded With Louis Theroux* podcast in 2020. "I think it was a stroke of luck that we didn't do it because I wasn't in a fit state to do it. We were originally asked but then I think everyone was just looking at the state of me and going, 'This might be more harmful than good'. So, they basically didn't follow up on it."



Boy George was battling addiction at the time and unable to take on a role

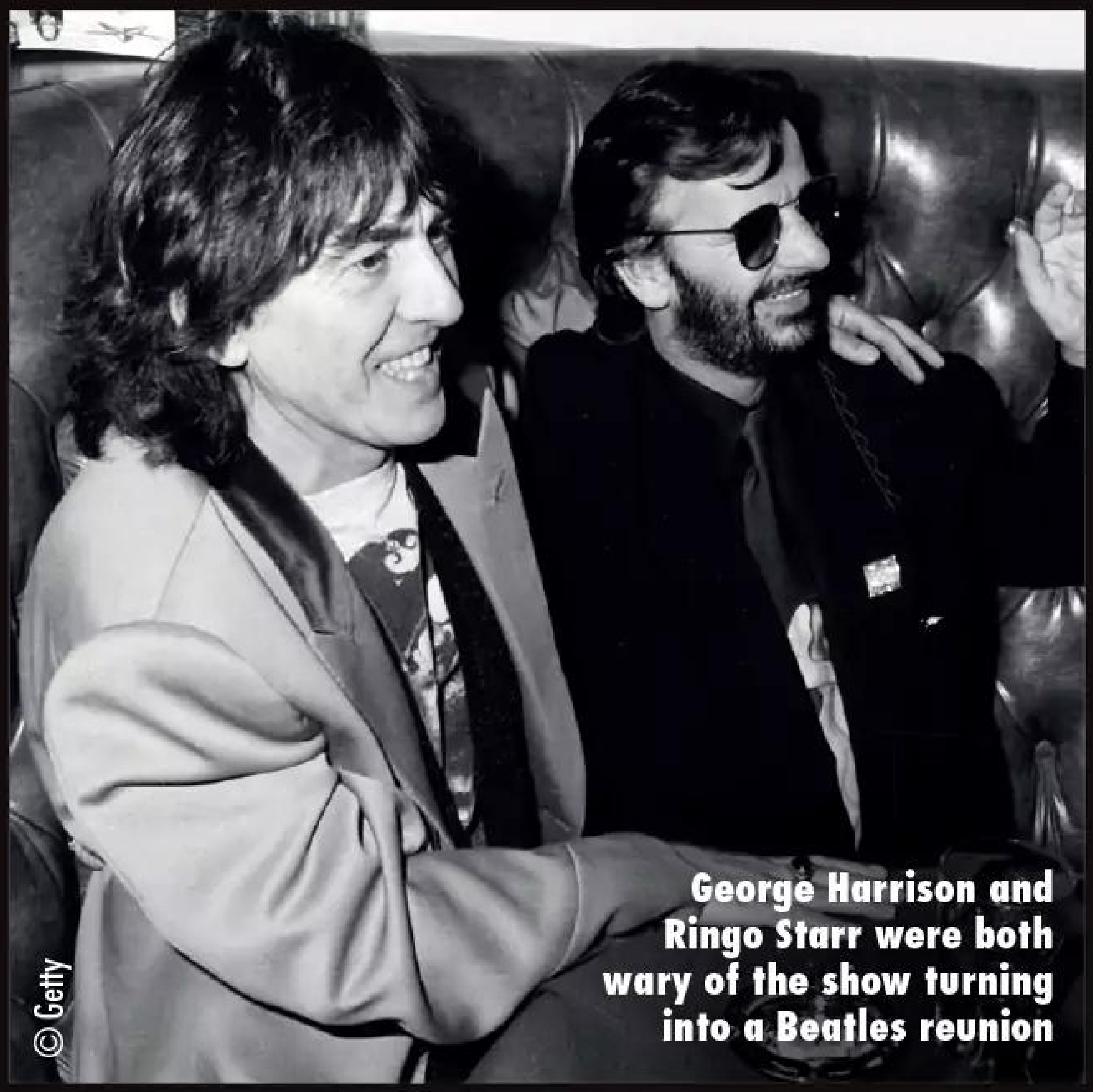
© Getty

FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD

In 1985, Frankie Goes To Hollywood were one of the biggest – and most notorious – pop acts on the planet. But frontman Holly Johnson had already started to distance himself from the rest of the band and Live Aid was no exception. "Bob wanted Frankie to appear at Live Aid and he pursued me throughout our world tour trying to persuade me to perform," Johnson told theartsdesk.com. "For some reason the band and our manager didn't want anything to do with it."

GEORGE HARRISON AND RINGO STARR

With Paul McCartney set to make his first live appearance since the murder of John Lennon, the stage was set for a reunion of the remaining Beatles. Bob Geldof has since said that though George Harrison – who'd organised The Concert For Bangladesh in 1971 – gave him advice, he was wary of the media circus that would surround a partial Beatles reunion. Starr was apparently also fearful of playing his own set, lest he be roped into an impromptu Threatles gig. Other reports suggest that Harrison wasn't keen on the choice of song – McCartney's *Let It Be*. Either way, McCartney was joined by David Bowie, Alison Moyet, Pete Townshend and Geldof for his performance.



George Harrison and Ringo Starr were both wary of the show turning into a Beatles reunion

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Contact us:
shop@anthem.co.uk
01371 853609

EDITOR **Rik Flynn**
ART EDITOR **Alvin Weetman**
PRODUCTION EDITOR **Rhian Drinkwater**
MANAGING EDITOR **Steve Harnell**
steve.harnell@anthem.co.uk
FOUNDING EDITOR/EDITOR AT LARGE
Ian Peel
ian.peel@anthem.co.uk
PUBLISHER **Katherine Raderecht**
katherine.raderecht@anthem.co.uk
CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER **Jenny Cook**
jenny.cook@anthem.co.uk
DIRECT MARKETING MANAGER
Rosie Pankhurst
rosie.pankhurst@anthem.co.uk
HEAD OF MARKETING
Cara Northcott
cara.northcott@anthem.co.uk
CHIEF EXECUTIVE **Jon Bickley**
jon.bickley@anthem.co.uk
MANAGING DIRECTOR **Sally FitzGerald**
sally.fitzgerald@anthem.co.uk
CONTRIBUTORS
Jamie Atkins, Jeremy Allen, John Earls,
Mark Lindores, Felix Rowe, Beth Simpson
PRINTING
Pensord Press
Tel +44 (0) 1495 223 721

DISTRIBUTION
Marketforce (UK) Ltd
121-141 Westbourne Terrace,
London W2 6QA
Tel 0330 390 6464
Hello@Marketforce.co.uk

LICENSING ENQUIRIES
Regina Erak Tel +44 (0)7753 811 622
regina.erak@globalworks.co.uk

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LIVE AID IN NUMBERS

IT WAS THE BIGGEST GLOBAL MUSICAL EVENT EVER TO TAKE PLACE AND STILL HOLDS THAT CROWN FOUR DECADES ON. *CLASSIC POP* EXPLORES THE FACTS AND FIGURES AROUND 1985's JAW-DROPPING SPECTACULAR.

Live Aid had an estimated global audience of

1.9

BILLION PEOPLE

OVER

70

ARTISTS

performed across Live Aid's shows

Live Aid was aired in

150 COUNTRIES

The entire Live Aid project was put together in just

10 WEEKS

Live Aid raised

£40 MIILION

on the day, and over

£114 MILLION

in total

Live Aid's event at Wembley Stadium in London hosted an audience of

72,000 PEOPLE

The show at John F. Kennedy Stadium in Philadelphia hosted

89,000 PEOPLE

40%

OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION WATCHED LIVE AID, MAKING IT THE LARGEST SIMULTANEOUS ROCK CONCERT TV AUDIENCE IN HISTORY

The UK and US events totalled over

16 HOURS

OF LIVE MUSIC

13

MILITARY SATELLITES

were utilised to transmit the show to viewers worldwide

Each act was given just

17 MINUTES

for their set, appearing free of charge

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